DAILY NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

THE TIMES

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I am a top doctor and I'm also autistic

INSIDE TIMES2

Argentina cries as Messi retires

Sport

Healey: I'll prove I'm no hypocrite on defence

Chancellor to set out 'clear path' on 3% target

Katy Balls Asheville
Max Kendix Washington Correspondent

The chancellor has vowed that defence will be central to his spending plans as he fought off allegations of hypocrisy for delaying a commitment of extra billions he had himself earlier demanded.

In an interview with The Times, John Healey tried to calm fears that he would defer a spending target of 3 per cent of GDP on defence and said he would set out a "clear path" at the spring review. However, he warned that filling a £5 billion hole in funding would mean "difficult decisions" at next month's budget.

The chancellor insisted he remained "100 per cent" committed to delivering on the Nato pledge of spending 3.5 per cent of GDP on defence by 2035.

Healey's June resignation as defence secretary over a 3 per cent target by 2030 was widely seen as ending Sir Keir Starmer's premiership.

Reaching that figure by 2030 would cost the UK an additional £17.3 billion, according to the Office for Budget Responsibility. However, as chancellor, he has refused to commit himself to the same target. Healey said being chancellor was a "bigger job", but insisted that defence would still be "central to the spending review" next year.

"For the first time at the spending review, we will set out a clear path about how we will meet that Nato commitment in 2035, of 3.5 per cent of GDP," he told The Times from the G20 summit in Asheville, North Carolina. "And as part of setting out that clear path, we will set that target date for 3 per cent."

Healey, who is under intense pressure from his American counterparts to increase defence spending, added that the funding would require "saying no" and making "difficult decisions".

He said: "The world has become more dangerous. The threats are increasing and we're stepping up further. There's always difficult decisions as chancellor. The most difficult decisions come to the chancellor and the prime minister in government."

Asked if Britain should spend 3 per cent of its GDP on defence, President Trump told reporters: "The UK's got some problems, but they'll get solved."

Andy Burnham will set out his vision for government today in a Commons appearance with a speech followed by questions from across the House.

It will be the first time he has faced scrutiny from opposition parties since becoming prime minister on July 20 and making a series of headline-grabbing commitments to ease the cost of living, which will also need to be costed at the budget.

James Cartlidge, the shadow defence secretary, has accused Healey of "backtracking on the very pledge which sealed the fate of the last prime minister and opened the door of No 10 to Andy Burnham".

Starmer's defence investment plan has already left Burnham and Healey with a £4.7 billion gap to fill at the budget this year. Healey's fiscal headroom, a cushion against future spending, is also thought to have shrunk from £22 billion to about £15 billion, raising the prospect of tax increases.

Healey has refused to rule out tax rises in the budget, and could turn to an increase in taxes on capital gains, banks, or even a comprehensive wealth tax to help fill the gap.

John Healey interview, page 6

JACK TAYLOR/REUTERS

Hot pink It was the adults' parade yesterday on the third and final day of the Notting Hill Carnival in London, which was celebrating its 60th anniversary. Police made 315 arrests and a man in his twenties died after entering a canal

Threat of water supply catastrophe upgraded

Fiona Hamilton Chief Reporter
Adam Vaughan Environment Editor
Steven Swinford

The risk of a catastrophic loss of water supply to one million people has been significantly upgraded by government officials in part because of the threat from hostile states.

Documents seen by The Times suggest a risk of up to 25 per cent of supply failure to a large town, a threat ranked as seriously as a pandemic. A failure of supply would require residents to evacuate and schools and hospitals to close. It could take months to repair. Officials ranked the potential consequences as "catastrophic".

It is a serious upgrade from 12 months ago when the national risk assessment concluded there was only a tiny chance of water infrastructure collapse and it would have a "minor impact".

Experts warn that decaying infrastructure and decades of underinvestment have made the water supply a vulnerability that could be exploited, in particular by Russia. That scenario has been underscored by a summer of heatwaves and drought, exacerbated by climate change.

A big loss of supply could occur as a result of deliberate contamination, a cyberattack on automated systems, infrastructure failure caused by power loss or fire, or environmental factors such as drought.

Last week it emerged that a government resilience campaign would warn people to stock up on bottled water and tinned food in case of national emergencies such as extreme weather or attack by a hostile state.

Paul Netherton, a former police national leader for resilience, said that climate change and the risk of attack were behind the new water risk.

"Climate change has meant the water system is increasingly vulnerable," he said. "We have seen how vulnerable this summer with the droughts. There are not enough pumping stations and treatment plants to cope with the strain on the system and those that we have are often in need of an upgrade. At the same time, the global threat picture has definitely changed. There is a higher

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IN THE NEWS

Rower in 'river rage'
A man was held for alleged assault and threats to kill after a "river rage" incident on the Thames in which an Olympic rower appears to have intervened. Page 5

Badenoch reshuffle
Kemi Badenoch put the Tory party on a war footing in case of an early election as she reshuffled her top team yesterday, sacking Mel Stride and Priti Patel. Page 8

'Invisible illness'
An "invisible illness" has become far more common since Covid but diagnosis is delayed because women are told symptoms are "in their head", experts say. Page 15

AfD on brink of win
At Saxony-Anhalt's election on Sunday, the AfD is poised to win by such a margin that it could obtain an absolute majority in the regional parliament. Pages 22-23

Watchdog for growth
A push for the competition watchdog to prioritise growth over regulatory interference will remain under Andy Burnham, the business secretary confirmed. Page 27

Villa outgunned
Reigning champions Arsenal maintained a perfect start to their season with a victory over Aston Villa last night, thanks to a single goal from Bukayo Saka. Back Page

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Today's highlights

7am **Alex Norris**, the justice secretary and lord chancellor
7.45am **Nick Timothy**, shadow justice secretary
10.30am The Times columnist **James Marriott** discusses his latest book, *The New Dark Ages*
10.50 am The journalist and author **Jonn Elledge** on the stories behind everyday innovations that made modern life possible
1pm The Times at One with **Jo Coburn**, right

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TODAY'S EDITION

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The woman on the balcony
Posh George: The criminal behind Farage, part 6

As Nigel Farage returns to parliament this week with a standards investigation hanging over his head, The Sunday Times Insight team are back with the latest developments since the original podcast series was released

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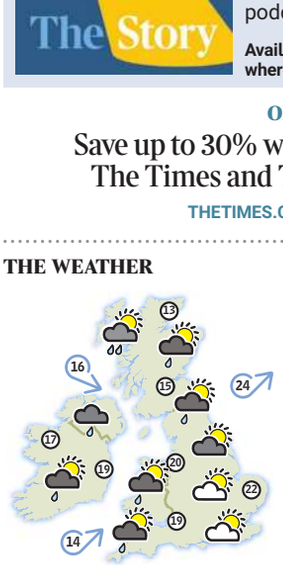
THE WEATHER



Sunny spells across the south and east, rain and showers in the north and west. **Full forecast, page 42**

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Industrial heartlands pay price for decline in manufacturing

Ben Clatworthy Whitehall Editor

England has lost 6,500 manufacturing businesses in the past five years, with industrial heartlands suffering the steepest declines, research has found.

Andy Burnham has promised to raise living standards through "reindustrialisation" of England, especially in parts of the country hit hard by the loss of heavy industry. An analysis of data from the Office for National Statistics shows the number of manufacturing businesses in England fell from 117,880 in 2020 to 111,375 last year, a decline of 5.5 per cent. More than seven in ten local authorities recorded a fall.

The North East was the worst performing region, losing 10.3 per cent of its manufacturing businesses, next were the East Midlands, down 8.4 per cent, and the North West, down 7.7 per cent. The figures are based on businesses operating principally in manufacturing, not individual factories.

A number of England's best-known industrial centres were among the hardest hit. Leicester lost 295 manufacturing businesses, with the total falling by 22.8 per cent, from 1,295 to 1,000. Birmingham recorded the loss of 195 businesses, dropping from 2,155 to 1,960. Derby and Coventry each lost 115, while Sheffield lost 90 businesses. Redcar & Cleveland recorded a 21.3 per cent decline, losing 50 of 235 manufacturing businesses.

The figures were compiled by Isembard, a manufacturing company producing components for aerospace, defence and energy sectors, using local authority data. Its founder, Alex Fitzgerald, said the findings of its first English Engines of Growth Index "lay bare the reality that Britain has spent two decades losing industrial capacity, as businesses have outsourced their manufacturing needs to the detriment of home-grown industries".

He added: "But this decline isn't inevitable. The skills, entrepreneurs and ambition exist, showing that reindustrialisation, rightly identified as a priority by the prime minister, is possible."

In total, the North East, North West, Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands and West Midlands lost 3,975 manufacturing businesses. Their combined total fell by 6.8 per cent, compared with a 4.2 per cent decline across London, the South East, South West and East of England. London was found to be the most resilient, with its total declining by 20 businesses, or 0.1 per cent.

On entering Downing Street, Burnham said that he wanted to "reindustrialise" Britain and rejected "wrong turns in the 1980s". In July, Kanishka Narayan, the AI minister, told the Financial Times that to understand the prime minister's vision, "we should think about chip factories, we should think about drones and defence and we should think about AI being applied to run manufacturing processes better".

One of Burnham's first acts as prime minister was to abolish the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. The majority of its functions were transferred to the Department for Business and Trade.

A government spokesman said it recognised the challenges manufacturing faced "after years of underinvestment and rising energy costs from global shocks like the wars in Ukraine and Iran. We're backing manufacturing and delivering on the prime minister's pledge to reindustrialise Britain, including slashing electricity costs for manufacturers ... and investing in the industries they depend on such as chemicals, ceramics and steel."

Plan to stop foreign homebuyers shelved

Ben Clatworthy Whitehall Editor

The government has shelved plans to restrict foreign buyers from buying new homes before they are built, breaching a manifesto pledge.

Under the plans, local residents would have been given first refusal on buying new properties. The move was intended to address the widespread sale of flats to non-resident investors, particularly in Asia.

The commitment was included in Labour's 2024 election-winning manifesto but, more than two years later, there has been no consultation, policy paper, or draft legislation.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, run by Angela Rayner, conceded to the Financial Times that the policy had been downgraded to an "option" rather than a pledge. It said: "We are looking at a range of options to support first-time buyers, and giving residents first refusal on buying new-build homes remains one of those options."

Sir Keir Starmer first promised to impose a "first dibs" policy when he was leader of the Labour opposition in 2021.

The proposals were met with a backlash from developers, especially in London, as they rely heavily on off-plan sales of flats to overseas investors.

The 2024 manifesto vowed: "Labour will work with local authorities to give first-time buyers the first chance to buy homes and end the farce of entire developments being sold off to international investors before houses are even built."

"There are ... schemes which are only viable because of the number of sales to people abroad, especially the Far East," one industry figure told the newspaper. "It's all very well saying companies should focus on first-time buyers but we have a serious lack of first-time buyers, which isn't helped by the lack of a successor scheme to Help to Buy."

The department said it was taking different action to help first-time buyers. "We've taken steps to support those buying a primary residence," it said.

US position on Falklands 'under review'

Max Kendix, Katy Balls

President Trump has said the status of the Falkland Islands is "one of many" positions he is reviewing as pressure builds on Andy Burnham to boost the UK's defence spending.

The British territory has been the centre of speculation for months, with suggestions that the Trump administration could formally recognise the islands as Argentinian as a way to put pressure on the UK to meet Nato spending commitments.

Asked if he was reviewing the long-standing US position that the islands belong to Britain, Trump said: "I always review every position. That's just one of many."

John Healey, the chancellor, who was defence secretary until his resignation in June, told The Times he had not heard the suggestion from his American counterparts.

He added: "The Falkland Islands are British. The Falkland Islands will remain British as long as the Falkland Islands want that to happen."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Water supply threat

likelihood that hostile states will deliberately disrupt our utilities, and the most impactive is power and water."

Netherton, who is a consultant on risk and resilience, said Russia's aim was to disrupt and cause division in British society and between Nato allies.

The national risk register, released in July, said there was a chance of between 5 per cent and 25 per cent of a failure of water infrastructure or loss of drinking water in a large urban area, "resulting in the loss of piped drinking water and impact to wastewater services for over one million people".

In 2025 the risk of water loss was assessed at between 0.2 and 1 per cent, with a "minor" impact, the lowest level.

Previously it assumed a small water treatment plant failed; now it assumes a larger one failing. Industry experts said greater government awareness of ageing infrastructure could explain the change. Alan Smith, a former employee of several companies including Yorkshire Water, said the vulnerability was the culmination of long-term factors that had "now really come to bite".

South East Water left 20,000 properties without water for two weeks this year in Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

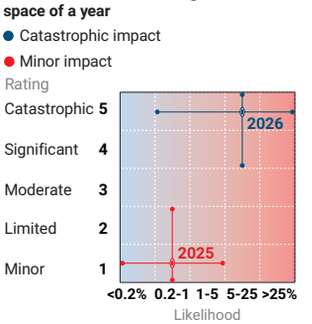
A government spokesperson said: "The national risk register is a planning tool and not a prediction of future events", adding: "A record £104 billion is being invested across the country to rebuild our water network. We are confident about the security of supplies."

Water UK, the industry body, said: "The National Infrastructure Commission and water companies have long called for the government to set resilience standards in water. Without them, water companies are prevented from investing enough to increase the security of our supplies."

Britain needs greater resilience, leading article, page 21

Running dry

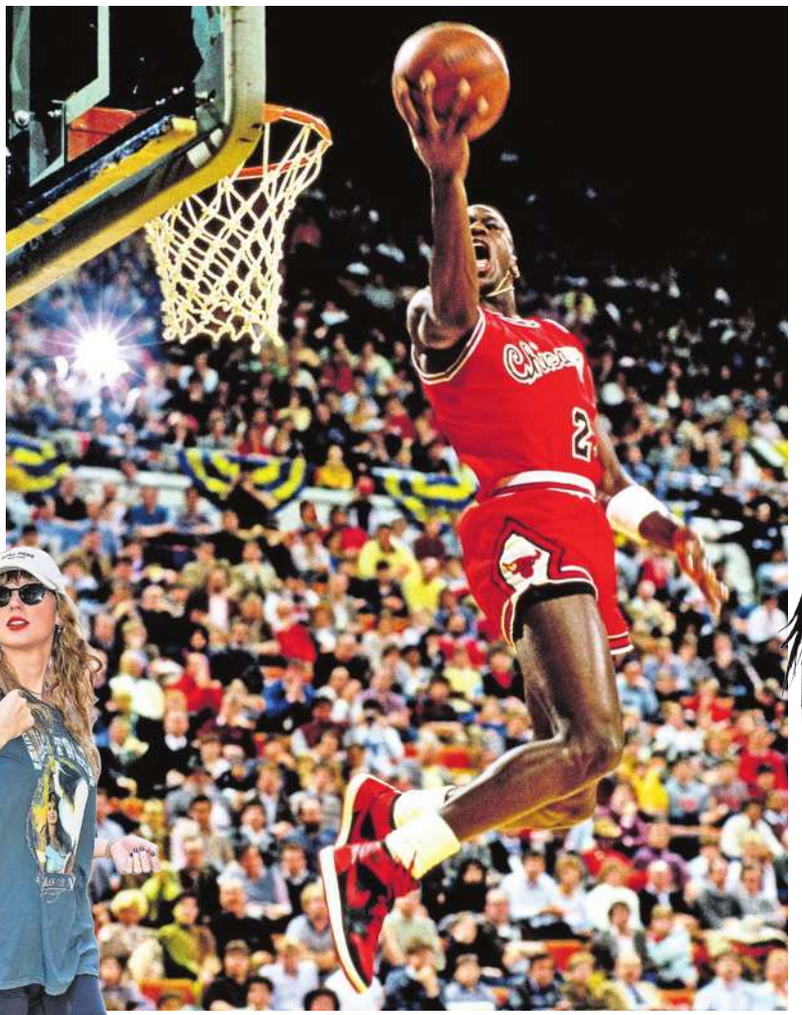
The government has increased its view on the risk of water shortages in the space of a year



Source: National Risk Register

Upstarts outrun the trainer kings

Celebrities are voting with their feet as new brands gain ground on Nike and Adidas, writes **Fintan Hogan**



ANDREW D. BERNSTEIN/GETTY IMAGES

Michael Jordan did wonders for Nike in the 1980s but Taylor Swift, left, favours New Balance, Rihanna, top right, has promoted Puma and Zendaya fronts Swiss brand On

For half a century, Nike has been the undisputed king of trainers, closely followed by its rival Adidas. From Nike's Air Jordan and Air Max to the Adidas Samba and Superstar, their designs have defined footwear trends on and off the sports field for generations.

But the brands are now facing the biggest shake-up of the industry in decades. A string of new rivals and the rising cost of living have challenged their position and helped to wipe nearly £150 billion from their market value.

Newcomer brands offer unique shoes for runners, luxury designers are experimenting with sportswear and sport stars and A-listers are cutting ties with the established giants.

"A couple of missteps have opened the door for new brands to pop up," said Tom Astrella, co-founder of the consultancy the Footsoldiers. "You can see it — the gap is closing on the big boys."

Their slump has also been blamed for poor results at high-street retailers. JD Sports, whose fortunes are closely aligned with Nike's, issued a profit warning in August.

Celebrities in particular are voting with their feet. The model Hailey Bieber wears Salomon, a company pivoting from skiwear to lifestyle. The actress Zendaya is the face — or rather the ankle — of the Swiss newcomer On. The running-focused brand was founded in 2010 when Olivier Bernhard, a triathlete, experimented with sticking a garden hose under his trainers.

Bernhard's DIY project has since turned into a £7 billion business which leads the market in design. On's novel products include moulded, spray-on shoes and some of the most popular cushioned soles.

The pop star Rihanna chose Puma — Adidas's historic rival from when the two companies were run by warring brothers — for a tie-up with her brand Fenty. Taylor Swift has not been seen in public in her Adidas Superstars for two years, but is often now pictured in Hokas and New Balance trainers.

Nike still leads the global sportswear market but it has failed to grow sales for almost three years. Shares in Nike and Adidas are down by almost 80 and 50 per cent from their respective peaks, wiping about £147 billion from their combined market value. Executives invested too heavily in direct-to-customer sales, particularly online, during the Covid pandemic, according to Sebastien Willefert, a business strategist and columnist at Sporting Goods Intelligence. "The strategy was a bit of a flop," he said. "They left room for the new brands to sell themselves in retail and actually expand their shelf visibility."

Small, innovative companies have marketed their products on social media and particularly benefited from the post-pandemic running boom.

"Hoka is hitting quite a lot of market share right now and On Running is doing quite some damage," said Willefert. "Nike is struggling to post growth at those kinds of numbers these days."

A loss of appetite in China has also been challenging. Driven by "*guochao*", or "China chic", the growing appetite for domestic fashion, Nike's Chinese sales are down by almost a third from 2021.

Anta, its largest domestic competitor, is even expanding on to Nike home turf: it opened its first US store in February and has signed several household names to represent it, including the basketball player Kyrie Irving and skier Eileen Gu.

Adidas has performed relatively well in comparison, partly thanks to the enduring success of its Originals collection. Sambas, Gazelles and other flat-soled trainers remain popular among the British middle-class and its 3D-printed shoes offer an interesting alternative for "sneaker-head" collectors. Sabastian Sawe, the Kenyan long-distance runner, also ran the first-ever competitive sub-two-hour marathon in April wearing Adidas shoes. However, the company was hurt by its association with the rapper Kanye West, a relationship it ended in autumn 2022 over his antisemitic comments.

Sport stars have been tempted away from brand deals with the big two. Harry Kane, the England striker, was a significant coup for Skechers in 2023; Lewis Hamilton, the Formula 1 driver, wears the Canadian wellness brand Lululemon; and Emma Raducanu plays her tennis in Uniqlo kit.

Americans raised on Nike and Adidas are having their heads turned by the value on offer. "In the US, with tariffs and so on, prices have started to be a bit of an issue," Willefert said. "Coming in underneath, starting to be more reasonable in terms of pricing, starts to resonate."

If Wordle is a doddle, try the harder challenge of getting it wrong

Tom Whipple

Do you think you are good at winning Wordle? Well, that's very 2021. The real test is, how good are you at not winning Wordle? And that, it turns out, is a far sterner test.

Because, as the unexpectedly popular game Don't Wordle shows, it's actually extremely hard not to guess a five letter word in six tries. Even if the first try is "xylyl".

Like sea shanties, sourdough starters and spas built without planning permission, the online game Wordle was a lockdown sensation.

The idea is simple. You have to guess a word in six goes. If the word is, say, "THING", and your first guess is "SHAFT", then the game will tell you that "S", "A" and "F" are wrong, that "T" is in the final word, but in a different place, and the "H" is in the right place. Then you guess again. Until, ideally, you iterate to "THING".

Don't Wordle is based on a finding that the original game is quite hard to lose

What Marc Reicher, a US software engineer, realised though was that part of the appeal of the game was that it was pretty hard to lose. "In the early days when Wordle became really popular, I played every day. It's a lot of fun. Wordle is so brilliant because it is so well calibrated. In six guesses, the game nudges you to the answer without totally giving it away," he said.

When in 2022 he wrote a program to test this idea, he came to a better understanding of just how hard it is to lose.

The rules of Don't Wordle, which in the past month has unexpectedly surged in popularity, are almost the same as Wordle's. As in Wordle, there is an unknown word. As in Wordle, you make guesses. As in Wordle, you are told which letters are placed correctly.

The first difference is, the game insists you play each word constrained by the one before. So if your second guess reveals that the word has "H" as its second letter, "T" somewhere else, and doesn't contain "S", "A" and "F", your third guess has to use that information.

The other difference is, you only win if after six guesses you haven't guessed it. Very, very quickly, Reicher found that the available words dwindle to almost nothing.

On TikTok, where Reicher has (somewhat bemusedly) found there are Don't Wordle influencers, people swap tips. "XYLYL", a chemical group derived from Xylene, is popular. As is "FLUFF", "VIVID" and "QAJAQ" (an archaic form of kayak). Even then, people normally lose.

Reicher concedes this is a problem. "Most people's reaction, the first time they play, is they hate the game." However then, he said, a few weeks later — bored, perhaps, with the certainties of a Wordle win — they come back to it. "I guess it's an acquired taste."

News

PAUL MARRIOTT

Heavy weather Entrants make their way to the ring at the Shire Horse Society's National Summer Show at Rockingham Castle last Thursday as storm clouds gather

Superhuman software can spot signs of heart disease in seconds

Poppy Koronka
Health Correspondent in Munich

Heart disease could soon be diagnosed "in the blink of an eye" with the use of "superhuman" software, according to leading cardiologists.

It was one of several breakthroughs in heart disease technology to be announced at the European Society of Cardiology congress in Munich.

The new software uses artificial intelligence alongside an electrocardiogram (ECG) to uncover signs hidden from the human eye. It could fast-track higher risk patients into treatment.

The research, funded by the British Heart Foundation (BHF), reliably detected heart disease from an ECG in less than two seconds.

The system is being trialled on 590 NHS patients in London and Bristol. Researchers hope the computer-assisted ECG could speed up diagnosis and treatment for patients in Britain in just two years. Almost 400,000 people in England are on the cardiology waiting list.

"These are exciting developments," Dr Roy Jogiya, chief medical adviser at Heart Research UK, said. "An ECG is one of the simplest and most widely available tests in medicine, but AI is showing us that it may contain far more information than the human eye can recognise.

"The real potential is not for AI to replace cardiologists or heart scans, but to act as an incredibly rapid extra pair of eyes. If a routine ECG can identify patients more likely to have heart failure or valve disease, we could triage them for scans and treatment much sooner." He added that the computer-assisted video diagnosis could be "transformative" for care but needed larger scale research.

Dr Sonya Babu-Narayan, clinical director at the BHF and a consultant cardiologist, said: "Technology like the AI ECG in this research, which has the potential to identify high-risk patients early, will not detect everyone with a heart condition. But it could be a solution to help fast-track the patients who are most likely to have a heart abnormality. When it comes to the heart, earlier diagnosis and treatment saves and improves lives."

Developed by scientists at Imperial College London, the AI model interprets the results of an ECG, which is used to detect the electrical activity of the heart to indicate heart attacks or abnormal rhythms.

It was trained using the data from 10.6 million ECGs and the clinical descriptions of them and was then tested on scans from more than 65,000 patients in the US. It correctly identified up to 81 per cent of patients who had heart failure and 90 per cent of those who had heart valve disease.

It cannot definitively diagnose on its own, but does give a strong indication of whether further testing and treatment may be required.

Separate research, also presented in Munich, found that high blood pressure and diabetes could be diagnosed from a five-second video, using AI software. The software could detect hypertension with more than 90 per cent accuracy and diabetes with more than 80 per cent accuracy from the short clips.

A short high-speed video of the face and palms of 215 participants was taken using a spectroscopic camera. Once trained on their videos, the AI was able to accurately diagnose high blood pressure using facial blood flow patterns, said a team from the University of Tokyo and Institute of Science in Tokyo.

It is hoped the approach could lead to better screening tools for high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease.

Baby food sold as healthy is high in sugar, says Which?

Eleanor Hayward Health Editor

Baby food is being marketed to parents as a healthy option despite containing high levels of sugar, a report has found.

One in five baby food products sold in major UK supermarkets contains excess sugar that puts children's health at risk, Which? has found.

The consumer group analysed 798 products sold at supermarkets including Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose. These included ready meals, pouches, purées and finger food for toddlers, such as puffs.

Popular brands such as Heinz, Kiddylicious, Ella's Kitchen and Organix were found to sell products with high sugar levels that could put infants at risk of tooth decay and obesity.

Which? suggested there was a particular problem with fruit and vegetable finger foods such as apple crisps or strawberry puffs, more than half of which were in breach of guidelines. In August last year, the government introduced voluntary industry guidelines for baby food manufacturers, asking them to reduce sugar and salt and to end misleading marketing by February 2027.

The Which? report said that these voluntary guidelines had had "no meaningful impact on the overall healthiness of commercial baby food".

Only three products had been reformulated, while 11 new products had been put on sale that exceeded the guidelines on sugar.

Kraft Heinz said: "We welcome the government's voluntary guidelines and are actively working to reduce sugar and salt where possible.

"We know these changes matter, and making them carefully helps us maintain the taste and quality parents and caregivers expect from our products."

Ella's Kitchen said: "We strongly support the new guidelines and believe they should be made mandatory across the baby food category."

Organix and Kiddylicious did not provide a comment.

Quintagram® No 2661

Solve all five concise clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Picturesque view (5)

_ _ _ _ _

2 Basil and pine nut sauce (5)

_ _ _ _ _

3 Scottish hockey-like sport (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

4 Written law (7)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 Devise methodically (9)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

A	A	A	E	E	E	F	H
I	I	L	M	N	O	O	P
R	S	S	S	S	T	T	T
T	T	T	T	U	U	V	Y

Solutions see T2 MindGames p15
Cryptic clues T2 MindGames p14

Greens' trans sport bid

Biological men would be given a legal right to compete in women's sports under proposals drawn up by Green Party members. The plans would "extend trans people's rights" to compete in the categories "they feel most comfortable in", The Telegraph reported. The proposals have been submitted for debate at the party's conference next month.

Carnival canal death

A man in his twenties has died after entering a canal while being pursued by police during the Notting Hill Carnival. Police had tried to stop him yesterday as he approached the carnival in west London, but he fled and went into the Grand Union Canal. He was pulled from the water and taken to a hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Synagogue safety fear

Nearly a year after the attack on a Manchester synagogue, survivors say the Jewish community feels increasingly vulnerable. Yoni Finlay, shot in the incident, revealed his son has faced death threats. Rabbi Daniel Walker added that the community's sense of safety has diminished since the attack, with security concerns remaining high.

Dolly Parton festival

Dolly Parton's estate has said a two-day festival honouring the singer, who died last month aged 80, will be held in Nashville and London over consecutive weekends next year. Dollyfest had been planned for January this year to mark her birthday but was cancelled because she was too ill. It would now "celebrate her legacy", the organisers said.

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Olympic rower intervenes in 'river-rage' incident on Thames

Shanti Das

A man was arrested for alleged assault and threats to kill after a "river rage" incident on the Thames in which an Olympic rower appears to have intervened.

Video reportedly shows the British silver medallist Jack Beaumont confronting a man on another boat who had been involved in an apparent clash with a rower over the bank holiday weekend. The clip, published by the Daily Mail, appeared to show the man telling Beaumont to "shut the f*** up" and adding: "I did nothing wrong. You f***ers think you own the water."

He then appeared to accelerate the motorised cruiser towards Beaumont, who was in a one-man boat, before steering away. It is not clear what happened immediately before the confrontation, in Maidenhead, on Sunday shortly after 7am. But a witness said the man was believed to have been involved in an incident with another rower and that there had allegedly been a collision.

Jack Beaumont next to the cruiser

The witness told the Mail: "Jack lured the speedboat away from the rowers. You have to wonder what could have happened if there wasn't someone as able as Jack on hand."

Maidenhead Rowing Club said it regarded what happened as a "serious and dangerous incident".

Beaumont — who won silver in the men's quadruple sculls at the Tokyo Olympics in 2020 — could not be contacted for comment.

Thames Valley police said a man in his sixties from Windsor had been arrested on suspicion of "criminal damage, threats to kill, a Section 4 Public Order Act offence, common assault, and using a watercraft in a manner that endangered a structure or individual".

It asked witnesses to contact them.

JACQUELINE LAWRIE/LNP

Nicola Lever, a local resident, at the site in Sawbridgeworth. Police were called to enforce an injunction against the building work yesterday

Villagers foil grab for wildlife haven

An injunction has been granted against "appalling" illegal building work carried out over the bank holiday weekend by "travellers" that destroyed wildlife-rich water meadows (Adam Vaughan writes).

On Friday afternoon, after contractors, vehicles and heavy diggers arrived at the greenfield site on Sheering Mill Lane in Sawbridgeworth, a town in Hertfordshire, hundreds of local residents swiftly rallied to try to protect the site.

Throughout Friday and Saturday the unauthorised works flattened the floodplain land, ripped up vegetation and filled in a watercourse to construct a crossing.

"They turned up and brought rubble and hardcore," said Nigel Blake, 71, a local resident. "Over the course of those two days, they've virtually decimated the land. So the call went out and everybody's been there protesting." He said police had advised residents that the road would be closed if more than 30 people protested. Blake estimated 250 people showed up on Sunday night to protect the site and more than 400 were present yesterday.

Greg Rattey, a local independent councillor, said: "[On Friday] we heard that travellers had started to enter the site.

"They had huge lorries for tarmacking and fencing and all sorts and of course it was the beginning of this. The villagers, local people from the town, came out and did a great job."

East Herts district council was granted an injunction enabling the police to arrest anyone in breach of its terms. "Police entered the site this morning and all those who had unauthorised access left the site peacefully," Hertfordshire constabulary said yesterday.

Josh Dean, the MP for Hertford & Stortford, said: "I'm appalled by the flagrant disregard for the rules and the damage to our environment."

One digger was removed yesterday. Harlow Fencing, which delivered to the site, said it believed it was supplying a "legitimate new-build development" before ceasing deliveries after concerns were raised.

Israel to deport Briton 'kidnapped by settlers'

George Greenwood

Israel plans to deport a British activist who was "kidnapped by settlers and assaulted" in the occupied West Bank before being transferred to police custody, according to reports.

Finn Joughin, a 22-year-old with links to East Sussex, was in the southern West Bank village of Umm al-Khair on Saturday. According to his lawyer, Inbar Shaked Vardi, he was engaging in "protective presence", a tactic used by pro-Palestinian campaigners to deter Israeli settlers from violence against those living in the occupied territories.

The Foreign Office confirmed to the BBC that it was aware of the incident. "Officials from the British embassy [in] Tel Aviv have raised the case with the Israeli authorities and are seeking further information," a spokesperson said.

Violence by Israeli settlers towards Palestinians has persisted for years, often with little or no legal consequence, but there has been a surge of attacks in recent months. Some settlers use violence and harassment to intimidate Palestinians into leaving their homes. More than 500,000 Israelis live in settlements in the West Bank, which are illegal under international law, alongside three million Palestinians.

Vardi said that children from settler families had entered Umm al-Khair's sports centre before attempting to dismantle fences that had been put up to protect residents from settler attacks.

Finn Joughin, 22, was in the West Bank village of Umm al-Khair

"Finn only stood there holding on to the fence in an attempt to stop the break-in. At that point settlers began yelling at him, accusations in Hebrew that he did not understand," Vardi said.

"He was taken to a shed inside the settlement of Carmel ... he was put in a headlock and his hands were tied behind his back and he was forced to sit on the floor in the shed for 30 minutes while settlers filmed humiliating videos that they later posted."

Israeli police were called to the scene and arrested him, Vardi said, adding that officers "interrogated him under the sole suspicion of assault". Police said a "foreign national who disturbed public order" was arrested and transferred to the immigration authority.

"A complaint was also filed against him on suspicion of assaulting a minor and other suspected offences," it added.

Vardi told the BBC that Joughin was initially accused of assault, but claimed police later added to the paperwork an allegation of an indecent act. "We absolutely deny all the allegations," she said. Activists with Joughin at the time deny there was any inappropriate behaviour.

Vardi said Joughin's case reflected a broader policy by the Israeli government and law enforcement to expand Jewish settlement in the territory.

Violence over the weekend prompted Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, to accuse settlers of harming the country's standing in the world.

US 'watching' Burnham's West Bank trade embargo

Max Kendix Washington

The Trump administration is "closely" tracking Andy Burnham's plan to implement a trade ban on Israeli settlements amid growing concern about a US backlash over the move.

The prime minister is expected to announce embargoes on goods and services involving West Bank settlements deemed illegal under international law, alongside the sanctioning of more senior Israeli figures, within weeks.

A US State Department spokesman told The Times it was "tracking [the plans] closely". Officials from the department are understood to have been in touch with representatives in the British embassy in Washington about the decision. "We do not publicly comment on private diplomatic conversations," the spokesman added.

Burnham is preparing "robust" sanctions on Israel in reaction to its "E1" expansion plan. More than 140 Labour MPs have called on Burnham to go further than some European allies, by covering services as well as goods in its embargoes.

Sources familiar with the Trump administration's approach to the issue emphasised that the strength of the reaction would depend on the rhetoric used by Burnham and any possible effect on US companies.

Differentiating which goods and services come from illegal settlements may be difficult and lead to a de facto shutting-down of business in Israel by some British companies worried about flouting the law.

Burnham could be protected by coordinating sanctions with other countries. In a statement last month the UK joined 17 European countries, as well as Australia, New Zealand and the European Commission, to call the E1 plan "unacceptable".

Two of Britain's largest Jewish organisations, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Council, have warned Burnham not to go ahead with the sanctions. Sir Ephraim Mirvis, the chief rabbi, told Ed Miliband, the foreign secretary, on Friday that many British Jews would view the proposed measures with "deep dismay".

The Foreign Office has said it will not "comment on speculation", but added: "The foreign secretary has been clear that illegal settlements threaten the viability of a Palestinian state and undermine security for both Israelis and Palestinians."

From water to welfare, tough

Ben Clatworthy Whitehall Editor

Andy Burnham will enter the Commons chamber as prime minister for the first time today to set out plans for his premiership. After a summer policy blitz designed to give people some "breathing space" from the cost of living crisis, attention is turning to some of the harder aspects of governing, including how to pay for it all, foreign affairs and migration.

Burnham began the hard choices on Sunday when he set out changes to the early release scheme, keeping 1,400 prisoners behind bars for longer and paving the way for thousands of inmates serving indefinite sentences — known as imprisonment for public protection — to be freed.

Making life affordable

In Burnham's speech he will pledge to make this "the moment when Britain starts believing again and we bring back hope". He will recap the measures he has taken over the summer, including cuts to VAT on electricity bills, caps on bus fares and reducing business rates for pubs. A No 10 source said at the weekend: "The prime minister does not accept that the government's role is to stand by and watch on as every bill goes up and up, squeezing the joy out of life. He will promise the country that wherever we can make life more affordable, we will."
Difficulty rating 1/5

Israeli settlements

Burnham is poised to announce "robust" sanctions on Israeli settlements in the West Bank, where there are plans for 1,200 extra settler homes. It is understood he will approve plans for a trade ban and the sanctioning of individuals. The announcement is likely to divide Labour MPs. Whitehall officials are concerned about the practicalities of the sanctions, especially in distinguishing between goods from the settlements and Israel. There are also fears that legitimate Israeli businesses could be hit, harming trade more broadly. The decision could also draw the ire of President Trump.
Difficulty rating 4/5

Drill, Andy, drill?

The decision on whether to approve new drilling at the Jackdaw and Rosebank oil and gas fields in the North Sea officially falls to Miatta Fahnbulleh, the energy secretary, but in reality command will come from No 10. Burnham is expected to approve Jackdaw, a gas field 150 miles east of Aberdeen owned by Shell, and the announcement will be made in the city. A decision on Rosebank will be deferred, with government sources suggesting that the licence is unlikely to be granted.
Difficulty rating 3/5

Labour's conference

In Liverpool, Burnham will need to set out what his government will stand for in the long run. It may also be an opportunity for simmering tensions suppressed by the change of leader to reignite. Trade unions and MPs on the left will push Burnham to go further on workers' rights, public ownership and welfare spending, while others will warn against policies that could unsettle businesses or the markets. A contest is under way for a new general secretary of the party after Hollie Ridley, an ally of Sir Keir Starmer, resigned. The new general secretary will be voted on by the ruling national executive committee and the decision rubber-stamped by members at conference.
Difficulty rating 1/5

The budget

John Healey's first budget as chancellor is expected to be a moment to "steady the ship", reassuring the country and the markets. Bold plans for wealth taxes or changes to council tax and stamp duty will be put on ice. However, there will still be difficult decisions, given that the fiscal headroom — the contingency for future spending — is thought to have fallen from £22 billion at the last budget in November to £15 billion. Healey also needs to find £4.7 billion to cover the shortfall in the defence investment plan left by Starmer.
Difficulty rating 3/5

Energy bills

Ofgem announced last week that the energy price cap would increase by 4 per cent in October, taking the annual bill for a typical household from £1,663 to £1,723. Cornwall Insight, the energy consultancy, predicted a 9 per cent rise in January, equivalent to a £149 price rise on average bills, driving them up by £209 overall by the start of next year. The price increases have more than wiped out the £117 saving Rachel Reeves announced at the last budget and the VAT cut that Burnham introduced. Work is under way in Whitehall to lay out a series of options for the prime minister and chancellor to offer households extra support with the cost of heating their homes this winter.
Difficulty rating 3/5

The welfare conundrum

Wanting a low-key budget is part of the reason that two reviews into the welfare state will not be published until later. Alan Milburn is preparing his final report on the youth unemployment crisis while Sir Stephen Timms, the disability minister, has been examining personal independence payments (Pip), which are forecast to cost £41 billion a year by 2031. Burnham has made clear he wishes to cut the welfare bill, given that £25 is being spent on benefits for every £1 on employment support, but has said he is opposed to "crude cuts".
Difficulty rating 4/5

Long-term thinking

Burnham's promised ten-year plan is expected in November. Departments will be told to make submissions and a series of documents will follow that lay out themes and priorities. There is also an expectation that some of the machinery of government will change, with arms-length bodies axed or merged.
Difficulty rating 3/5

EU relations

Burnham believes Britain needs to be "bolder" and establish closer ties with the European Union. The UK and EU will hold a second summit in the autumn, having delayed the planned July meeting after Starmer resigned. One of the biggest decisions will be whether to stick to Starmer's red lines. In particular he had insisted that the youth mobility scheme for under-thirties should have a cap of 50,000 and that EU students should not benefit from reduced university fees. Last week it was reported Burnham could be open to cutting university fees in return for substantial concessions on trade.
Difficulty rating 3/5

Andy Burnham will face his first prime minister's questions tomorrow

Defence spending

The subject will largely be left until next year's comprehensive spending review, expected in the spring. The chancellor has been criticised for not agreeing to increase spending to 3 per cent by 2030. Senior military chiefs have repeatedly said the feasibility of hitting the 3.5 per cent Nato target will become significantly more challenging if steps are not taken to raise spending now.
Difficulty rating 5/5

Stopping the boats

Crossings may be down 43 per cent compared with last year but the sight of so-called "mega-dinghies" has led to fresh scrutiny. And with 16,391 migrants having arrived this year, the crossings are placing ever-growing strain on the creaking asylum system, housing and public finances. Burnham said affluent areas of the country needed to play their part. This will come at a cost as the Home Office will have to pay more for accommodation, but is part of a wider political strategy to win back voters in Labour's traditional northern heartlands who have become increasingly angry with asylum seekers living in homes of multiple occupancy.
Difficulty rating 4/5

Immigration

Perhaps an even greater challenge will be changes to settlement rules. Shabana Mahmood, the home secretary, will finally announce how long migrants must wait before they become eligible for permanent settlement. About 1.6 million migrants already here may need to wait longer. Mahmood is expected to announce exemptions for certain types of migrants, possibly including care workers, those in the public sector and high-earners.
Difficulty rating 4/5

Social care

In July Burnham was explicit in his diagnosis: the social care system was broken and was as "unfair" as the American health service model. He has championed the creation of a National Care Service and as prime minister has brought forward a review into adult social care by Baroness Casey of Blackstock by a year. She will publish her recommendations by next summer. Burnham is pushing for a binding fair pay agreement to align care worker pay with equivalent NHS bands by 2028.
Difficulty rating 5/5

Thames Water

Burnham has repeatedly indicated that he wants to put Thames Water into special measures but officials have raised concerns about the risk to taxpayers, the potential for legal challenges and the "practical barriers". It is understood the government is conducting further work, likely to take several months.
Difficulty rating 3/5
Additional reporting by Matt Dathan

Healey aims to 'refresh' the special relationship

Katy Balls Washington Editor

In Asheville overlooking the Blue Ridge mountains, John Healey and his counterparts are keeping an eye out for predators. American black bears are prowling the North Carolina estate where G20 financial leaders have gathered to discuss the world economy and what that means for voters back home. The chancellor skipped a run on Sunday morning with two other finance ministers after Scott Bessent, his US counterpart, asked him for a meeting. "It's probably a relief. If we'd been out there in the grounds in the early mornings, who knows? Bessent did say: 'Look, there are only black bears.'" Brown bears are the more dangerous variety.

Yet plenty of political danger lurks as Healey completes his first trip abroad since entering No 11. He resigned as Sir Keir Starmer's defence secretary in protest at the Treasury's failure to pledge to spend 3 per cent of the national income on defence by 2030. So when he was made chancellor, expectations were high both for him and Andy Burnham. But it seems his first budget will not deliver in full what he only a few months ago thought was vital. Defence will have to wait; meanwhile the chancellor wants to talk about other things.

While Burnham's supporters have made a point of the new prime minister's domestic focus, Healey, 66, a Labour veteran, says his job will naturally take him overseas. "I want to be a chancellor that talks up Britain. We've got to step up international co-operation in order to deal with the challenges that we face: [the] Middle East, energy prices, cost of living, growth. No one country can do that alone."

For him, America is a key ally, if not the most important. "For me, just like in defence, the US is the UK's most important economic partner," he says. "We've got about 1.3 million Brits that work in American companies, vice versa. We're heavily invested in each other's countries. The UK is the biggest, the largest investor in 21 of the US states." He adds: "But with any relationship, it requires refreshing with every generation."

So far that process included a meeting with Bessent at the Omni, the five-star hotel estate, which overran as the

John Healey with his counterpart

Ex-minister: Britain is poorer than we think

Ben Clatworthy, Steven Swinford

Britain is "poorer than we often think" and cannot rely on higher public spending to make the country "great again", a former minister has said.

Darren Jones, the former chief secretary to Sir Keir Starmer, said that higher public spending alone would not lead to economic growth.

Writing for The Times, he said: "Britain is poorer than we often think. We won't get richer based on higher public spending alone, and we can't tax billionaires who don't live here. We shouldn't rely on public spending as a route to some romantic version of making Britain great again as we look in the rearview mirror for a great history that is no longer available to us. We must face the future, and I know my colleagues are up to the challenge."

Jones was removed from government by Andy Burnham when he took office in July, and the digital ID scheme that Jones had been in charge of was scrapped. Jones fired a first warning shot to Burnham the day after his sacking when he confirmed that the ID scheme had been unfunded and the Cabinet Office had been asking departments to find the money within existing budgets. He now plans to start a backbench caucus of MPs to scrutinise the government's fiscal prudence.

He said the country was at an "urgent inflection point" on AI, climate change and defence capability, and that Burnham's ten-year plan, expected in November, must "rise to these challenges".

choices in Burnham's in-tray

KIRSTY O'CONNOR/TREASURY

Scott Bessent, the US secretary to the Treasury, in Asheville, North Carolina. The pair bonded when discussing the number of veterans in British and US politics

pair bonded over the substantial number of veterans in the US congress, and also now in the UK parliament.

When he quit as defence secretary in June, he released a letter telling Starmer that he has "been unable, and the Treasury has been unwilling, to commit the resources that the nation needs to defend the country at this time of rising threats". Now, as first confirmed to The Times last month, he is delaying his own target of 3 per cent by 2030 until after the budget. The accusations of hypocrisy have not been long in coming.

But Healey insists he is "100 per cent" committed to his 3 per cent target, and is offering a timeline. Defence, he says, "will be central to the spending review" next year, not just 3 per cent but the higher 3.5 per cent "core defence" target that Starmer signed up to at a Nato summit in The Hague in June.

"For the first time at the spending review, we will set out a clear path about how we will meet that Nato commitment in 2035: 3.5 per cent of GDP. As Burnham has said on his first day as prime minister, we will fully meet our commitments to our allies. And as part of setting out that clear path, we will set that target date for 3 per cent." It's 2.6 per cent right now and there are no plans to take it beyond 2.7 per cent. Hitting 3 per cent by 2030 would cost £10 billion a year.

So is he asking for patience but assuring people that he is committed? "100 per cent".

He says his experience as defence secretary will help define his tenure as chancellor. Here in Asheville, he came face to face with a Russian counterpart for the first time. "This is the first time in five years I've been able to look a Russian minister in the eye and condemn the illegal invasion."

The UK government has asked allies to step up international co-operation to "cut off the financial networks that fuel Russian aggression", with the first industry-wide alert issued exposing methods of Russia's notorious A7 sanctions-dodging network and more penalties for those involved in breaches. "My determination as a defence secretary to call out Putin will be matched by my determination as chancellor now to put maximum economic pressure on Russia to help bring them seriously to the talks and end this war."

As for the coming budget, Healey warns that even without setting out a plan next month to hit the Nato spending target, difficult decisions are coming. His first job is to fill a £4.7 billion spending black hole. "I'm committed at this budget to fully fund the defence investment plan as the first step that Keir and Rachel agreed, but wasn't fully funded. We will fully fund that," he said.

"Fundamentally, the first duty is fiscal discipline. The reason for that is that it is the bedrock on which you can create economic stability, the investment and the growth for the future. So I'm determined that we continue to bear down on our deficit and debt."

Is it fair to say that he is going to have to make some difficult decisions starting? "Yes. There's always difficult decisions as chancellor." What about wealth taxes? Lord O'Neill of Gatley warned in The Times that this would be "stupid". Healey won't be drawn on the idea. "I'm not going to respond to that."

And who is he looking to for inspiration as he embarks on his biggest brief to date? Healey cites the Labour chancellor under Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan. "It'd be hard not to have a soft spot for Denis Healey, my namesake. I met him at one of the very first Labour conferences I ever went to."

With parliament now resuming and the October 28 budget seen as the first real test of the Burnham government, Healey may well need all the inspiration he can get.

We can't rely on public spending as a path back to greatness

Darren Jones
Comment

Every successful political project starts with a credible analysis of the country. Britain is at an urgent inflection point on three fronts. First, the effect of artificial intelligence on the economy and the labour market (especially for young people). Second, our national resilience and ability to adapt to climate change. And third, our defence capabilities at a time of heightened threats.

The prime minister will publish a ten-year plan in November. This plan must rise to these challenges, or the sugar rush of short-term announcements will be meaningless in the face of the populist backlash that will follow.

The prime minister has done an impressive job this summer in cementing his positive ratings with the public and improving my party's position in the polls. To continue this success, it's important that the plan tackles the big long-term challenges we face as a country. The plan must then become the new government's strategy for our country and have sufficient clarity on the two or three big priorities the state must deliver.

The autumn budget will be a "steady-as-she-goes" moment. The chancellor will take decisions to recover headroom following the economic impact of the conflict in Iran, meet the higher costs of government borrowing, and pay for some of the spending pressures the government is carrying.

These will include higher public sector wage bills due to higher-than-hoped inflation, commitments made in the defence investment plan, and funding announcements recently made by the prime minister to give people some breathing space. I hope there might be good news for business, and any subsidy package for energy bills this winter will need to be factored in.

The chancellor will not want this to be a big tax-raising budget, although some revenue will need to be found. Small, targeted tweaks could be made to the debt fiscal rule, especially where it relates to investment in the development of new towns, for example. But the chancellor may not want to take this step in his first budget.

This means, though, that the strategic alignment of public spending to delivering the new ten-year plan — with the big, difficult decisions that come with that — will now be done as part of a spending review and subsequent budget next year. That is the right way to do it, but early action should be taken to not waste time.

Politically, we shouldn't see conflict between growth and fairness, or business and workers, or the market and the state. These are false choices.

Economic growth is the foundation of a better life for the people we represent. Growth must mean higher wages, stronger public services, good homes, safe streets, thriving town centres, dignity in work and retirement, and profitable, growing businesses.

Britain is poorer than we often think. We won't get richer based on higher public spending alone, and we can't tax billionaires who don't live here. We shouldn't rely on public spending as a route to some romantic version of making Britain great again as we look in the rearview mirror for a great history no longer available to us. We must face the future, and I know my colleagues are up to the challenge.

Finally, at the end of all this is a family looking to the future and asking: is Britain heading in the right direction? Labour will only get re-elected if the answer is yes.

Darren Jones was chief secretary to Sir Keir Starmer

Stride and Patel go in Tory reshuffle

Ben Clatworthy Whitehall Editor

Kemi Badenoch put the Tories on a war footing in case of an early election as she reshuffled her top team yesterday before Andy Burnham's first Commons appearance as prime minister.

The conservative leader sacked Sir Mel Stride, her shadow chancellor, and Dame Priti Patel, the shadow foreign secretary, in a clear-out of big party beasts from its time in government.

Andrew Griffith was promoted to shadow chancellor as Badenoch sought to "change the way the party approaches economic policy". He will lead an economic unit focusing on growth, living standards and fiscal credibility.

Tom Tugendhat, the former security minister who has been on the back benches since he ran for the party leadership in 2024, was appointed to replace Patel. Alongside his new foreign affairs brief, Tugendhat, one of the party's leading China hawks, will have a "beefed-up" role that includes work on defence.

A source close to Badenoch said: "Within parliament, Tom has almost unrivalled credibility in foreign affairs as a former soldier, security minister and chair of the foreign affairs select committee. Kemi has made defence one of the central organising principles of her leadership. Alongside Alex Burghart and James Cartlidge, Tom will be part of a three-person team leading on our national security and international affairs."

Claire Coutinho, who was shadow energy secretary, was promoted to the business, innovation, science and trade role, a position she will take up after maternity leave. Until the new year, her role will be covered by Julia Lopez, who was a minister from 2021 to 2024.

Coutinho will also act as Griffith's deputy and sit within the new economic team. The source said: "The team will be led by Andrew Griffith, a no-nonsense, pro-growth shadow chancellor with real business experience. Claire Coutinho will be Andrew's deputy across the economic brief, as well as shadow business secretary, and will make sure growth translates into higher living standards."

Stride, who had held the role since Badenoch became leader, was seen by MPs as competent but failing to make an impression against Labour at the dispatch box. Despite the criticism, Badenoch paid tribute to Stride's "skewering of Rachel Reeves". She said: "Mel came into the job at an exceptionally difficult point for the Conservative Party. He brought experience, seriousness and stability when those things were badly needed. He helped us steady the ship, rebuild economic credibility and become an effective opposition, and I am genuinely grateful for his contribution."

Griffith, who was a junior minister under Rishi Sunak, is the former chief operating officer of Sky and chairman of Just Eat. A party source said: "While the Labour front bench has almost no private sector experience, Andrew's experience means he not only knows but understands the many issues that businesses face and has a wealth of contacts in the business community.

"Andrew and Kemi are in complete lockstep on how we back business, bring down taxes and regulation and get Britain working again."

Badenoch also used the reshuffle to promote three 2024 intake MPs, including Katie Lam, the well-respected MP for the Weald of Kent, from the back benches. She will take on the shadow housing job, making her Angela Rayner's opposite number.

The role was vacant after Sir James Cleverly quit to run for London mayor. Cleverly said Badenoch was "very supportive" when he told her last week of his plans to step down, though she would "stay neutral" on the Tory selection process for a mayoral candidate.

Harriet Cross, MP for Gordon & Buchan, who is widely seen as another up-and-coming backbencher from the 2024 intake, was promoted to shadow Scotland secretary. Rebecca Paul, MP for Reigate, replaced Nigel Huddleston as the shadow culture secretary.

Patel, the former Conservative home secretary, said she would be taking on an "international role" for the party with the aim of strengthening its links to similarly aligned parties around the world. On Sunday night she had said returning to the back benches would also give her "greater freedom to stand up" for her Witham constituency, in Essex, in the Commons.

Damian Hinds, who served in ministerial positions under four Tory prime ministers, was promoted back to the shadow cabinet at health. Andrew Bowie moved from the Scotland brief to energy, replacing Coutinho.

Splintered right-wing vote could turn us Green, Melanie Phillips, page 18
The Tories need to show they have new ideas, leading article, page 21

BEN WHITLEY/PA

Kemi Badenoch with Andrew Griffith, the new shadow chancellor. Tom Tugendhat becomes shadow foreign secretary and Claire Coutinho will take over as business secretary when she returns from maternity leave

Early-release tweaks risk lack of cells

Ollie Cole Times Radio Reporter
George Odling

England and Wales may run out of prison spaces next year after Andy Burnham reduced the number of prisoners who qualified for early release.

The prison estate may also soon have fewer free spaces than when Labour took power despite the plans to let thousands out early, according to an analysis of Ministry of Justice (MoJ) figures. On Sunday, the government announced that it would block the early release of all manslaughter prisoners including the killers of PC Andrew Harper, and those convicted of historic grooming offences, death by dangerous driving and causing or allowing the death of a child.

The prime minister said he had "spent the summer turning over every single stone" to restrict the scheme.

Analysis of government data by The Times indicates that by May just 1,200 prison cells could be available even if demand hits only the MoJ's lowest projections. In the most extreme scenario there could be a shortfall of 600 places.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) said last night that it would embark upon what it said was the largest prison building programme since the Victorian era by fast-tracking £110 million from existing budgets to add 14,000 extra spaces by 2031. Prison laundry rooms and unused offices would be converted into cells. The latest government data shows a projected capacity of 88,300 places in the adult prison estate in May, rising to 89,800 in 2028.

Burnham's revised scheme will begin with 700 early releases on October 1. Figures released on Sunday show about 4,500 prisoners will be released early, in ten tranches, before June. Some 6,000 criminals were set to be eligible for early release under the original plan but Burnham has excluded about 1,400.

In its annual statement on capacity, the MoJ predicted that between 86,000 and 88,400 prison places would be needed next year. Between 700 and 1,200 places would be spare, according to central or low-demand projections.

Should high-demand projections become a reality, the prison estate would be short of about 600 places.

The MoJ's next annual statement on prison capacity will include updated projections accounting for Burnham's exclusions, it is understood, but they will not be released until later this year.

Alex Davies-Jones, the justice minister, admitted that changes to the early release scheme would leave prison capacity "very tight". She told the BBC that colleagues at the MoJ, including Alex Norris, the lord chancellor, had been asked to free up capacity through the removal of foreign offenders and changes to the imprisonment for public protection (IPP) regime.

Claire Waxman, the victims' commissioner, urged ministers to turn their attention to the thousands of victims of those eligible for early release.

Early release, letters, page 20

Chagos occupation backed by Farage in choppy water

George Greenwood

A Nigel Farage-backed expedition to symbolically reoccupy the Chagos Islands faces challenges with rats, "frazzled" tents and a boat that cannot traverse the surrounding ocean.

A small expedition was launched in February as part of a plan to block a contentious deal to give sovereignty over the islands, which host a US-UK military base, to Mauritius.

The accord, signed last year, is supported by some Chagossians but opposed by others, especially those within the UK. It has been stalled after opposition from President Trump.

The expedition comprised nine people — four British Chagossians, a Reform UK politician, a journalist and a small crew. They sailed illegally and jokingly named the expedition "Operation Certain Death", the Financial Times reported. Although the politician, crew and journalist have left as planned, the Chagossians who remain have limited food, threadbare tents and no boat capable of crossing the ocean.

"The truth is, we have been winging it," said the politician, the former Tory MP Adam Holloway, who stayed on the island for ten days. "It's not easy living there," he added. "The tents are now absolutely frazzled, and water is always a challenge."

Nigel Farage, the Reform UK leader, has previously said he planned to make the Chagos Islands "the greatest marine-tourism area in the world".

The UK government has struggled to evict the group. In March, the British Indian Overseas Territory Supreme Court quashed a previous order stripping Chagossians of the right to live in the territory. The UK government is appealing against the decision.

ALMA PROUST

Paris Alma, left, and Milli Proust sell seeds in packets with hand-drawn illustrations that appeal to younger generations

Seed packets serve Gen Z's growing love of gardening

Seren Hughes, Peter Chappell

"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow," Audrey Hepburn once said. Such was the actress's love of nature that she used her only television series to present viewers with a personal selection of her favourite gardens.

Hepburn's enthusiasm is being increasingly shared by the younger generation, not least by Milli Proust, who has grown a seed company into a successful business using beautifully illustrated seed packets.

Whereas seed packets were once a gaudy addition to a shopping basket at the checkout, or bought en masse from a supplier, Proust says young women are turning to her hand-drawn products as they yearn to do something rooted in the natural world.

She has taken up Hepburn's mantra as inspiration for her own business, which has won an online Gen Z and millennial audience interested in gardening. The whimsical illustrations of flowers hand-drawn by Proust are not only perfect for sharing online or repurposing as art, but she also believes they speak to a generation "thirsty for hope".

Proust sells seeds with her business partner Paris Alma through Alma Proust, their floral design studio, seed shop and flower farm in West Sussex. Their top customer base is women between the ages of 25 and 55.

"I think people are realising that you can spend the amount of a coffee to get so much beauty and abundance," Proust, 37, said. Their seed packets, sold online and in select garden centres, start from £2.90.

"They're just basically like these little packets of beauty that's yet to come," she enthused. "You get to invest in a tiny bit of a beautiful future. I think we are so thirsty for hope with the climate crisis and political crisis happening all the time." Proust also believes planting seeds is a sign that people are beginning to choose "participation over consumption". "People want to learn the thing and do the thing and feel the thing and participate in life," she said.

"Gardening is so physical. It's one of the only parts of the world that the algorithm can't touch because AI can't tell us yet exactly everything that's going to happen with the weather and with the growing, with your soil. There is something so inherently analogue about the garden."

Proust added that artificial intelligence "misses out on the everyday little joys of creating". She said that Gen Z were showing on social media that you "don't have to be perfect" and teaching each other to "embrace showing the process", which is "totally anti-AI".

Proust's personal Instagram page, which has 183,000 followers, is filled with a combination of flower arrangements, glimpses of the challenges on the farm, and tips for growing.

On a more basic level, Proust believes their customers "just love to buy from people".

"The feedback is that they can tell that there's so much love that's poured in and time poured into the packets," she said of her business.

"What I also love about seeds is that they kind of collapse time and they connect you to people who have been doing that for years, picking out the ones that have done best.

"But also we're picking out the best varieties for the future to connect all the growers that have come before us and all the growers that are yet to come.

"And I think that kind of amazingly connected thing that's so tangible is something that people also love in this insanely overly connected world. True connection, I think, matters a lot more to people."

Another business benefitting from green-fingered young people is Re-Root, which provides gardening starter kits for those with limited space in urban areas. Its founder, Ed Sparrow, 31, said his kits, which come with seeds, bulbs and compost, are "designed to be used in a small space on a balcony, on a windowsill, or mounted on the wall".

"They don't require lots of specialist knowledge about how you plant them and when you have to transfer them or anything like that. Because I think there's a lot of appetite for getting into gardening, but maybe not if it's too hard," he said.

"And the other part of it is trying to make it a bit more modern looking, a bit more aesthetic, Instagrammable. So, the planters that I've designed are quite sleek, stainless steel, and less of the traditional terracotta and plastic things that are in garden centres.

"That's the same with lots of the seed companies and seed packets that focus specifically on those. Because again, they are selling kind of the same product as ever, but it just looks better and it's more friendly — less daunting."

Paid-leave call for parents of ill children

Tash Mosheim

Parents of seriously ill children should be given three months of paid leave, the children's commissioner has said.

Dame Rachel de Souza is calling for parents whose children develop serious physical or mental health conditions to receive 12 weeks of leave at 90 per cent of their normal pay.

The proposal, known as Hugh's Law, is named after Hugh Menai-Davis, who died from cancer in 2021 aged six.

His parents, Ceri and Frances Menai-Davis, campaigned for employment law changes after witnessing families trying to work from hospital while their children underwent treatment.

De Souza said parents had described making "impossible choices". She added: "We should never force parents to choose between holding down a job and being by their child's bedside. Our existing employment rights are failing parents and carers."

Ceri Menai-Davis told the BBC's *Today* that the proposal would work in a similar way to maternity or paternity leave. Hugh was diagnosed with cancer during the Covid pandemic in 2020. His father said: "We watched parents trying to navigate the workplace, in the hospital room, next to their child, taking Zoom calls, writing reports, being pressured by bosses, whilst on the other side of the screen their child is receiving life-saving treatment."

Menai-Davis argued the policy could also benefit employers by helping them to retain staff and save on replacement costs, which could be much higher.

The children's commissioner's office said the financial strain could be particularly severe for families facing long hospital stays. Its analysis of children born in or after 2008 found that 260,141 had spent at least three weeks in hospital during their childhood.

De Souza is also backing an increase in unpaid carer's leave from five to ten days a year, the introduction of a form of paid carer's leave and a right for people to return to their jobs after longer periods spent caring.

The government has been consulting on how employment rights could better support unpaid carers and parents of seriously ill children. Kate Dearden, the minister for the future of work, said: "I've been incredibly moved by the powerful stories we have heard, and we will move quickly to consider how we can strengthen support and employment rights for families facing serious childhood illness."

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Music publishers sue tech giant for 'blatant AI theft'

Ross Kaniuk

Two of the biggest music publishers have begun a multi-billion dollar lawsuit against Anthropic, the AI company, for alleged misuse of tens of thousands of copyrighted works.

Sony Music Publishing and Warner Chappell Music claim that they are victims of "one of the largest and most blatant ongoing thefts of intellectual property in history".

The compositions include Mariah Carey's *All I Want for Christmas is You*, Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell's *Ain't No Mountain High Enough*.

The lawsuit, filed in California on Friday, targets Anthropic, Dario Amodei, its chief executive, and Benjamin Mann, its co-founder. It alleges that the defendants breached copyright law by "torrenting, scraping and downloading" lyrics from copyrighted works to train its Claude AI models and reproducing those lyrics in AI responses.

It claims that Mann and Anthropic downloaded at least seven million copies of books from pirate websites.

It is also alleged that Anthropic stripped identifying information from songs, which denied copyright owners "valuable attribution" to their work.

Anthropic said: "We disagree with the publishers' claims and we intend to defend ourselves robustly in court."

Anthropic has settled for £1.1 billion in a case brought by US authors over alleged copyright infringements.

News

‘Rank hypocrisy’ of British judge on Hong Kong court

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

Democracy campaigners have renewed calls for a senior retired British judge to quit Hong Kong’s highest court, accusing him of hypocrisy over the imprisonment of Jimmy Lai.

Lord Neuberger of Abbotsbury, a former president of the UK Supreme Court, continues to sit as one of six Commonwealth judges on the territory’s court of final appeal.

The continuing status of those judges has grown increasingly controversial against the backdrop of Beijing’s crackdown on pro-democracy campaigners and the imprisonment of Lai, a newspaper publisher and British citizen.

Lai, 78, was handed a 20-year prison sentence this year after he was convicted of colluding with foreign forces under Hong Kong’s national security law, which western legal experts have decried as draconian.

The Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong has reignited calls for Neuberger, also 78, specifically to resign, pointing out that he is a patron of the British charity Prisoners Abroad which was founded nearly 50 years ago and has a stated mission “to protect, support and advocate for the health, welfare and human rights of British citizens in prison abroad”.

Committee officials first raised the issue of Neuberger’s role at the charity two years ago, when he was a trustee. In a statement released today, they note that not only has he not resigned from the Hong Kong bench, but he has risen to become the charity’s patron, joining luminaries such as Dominic Grieve, the former Tory attorney-general, and Sir Ephraim Mirvis, the chief rabbi.

The committee said Prisoners Abroad had “received millions of pounds in funding” from the Foreign Office and “yet Lord Neuberger has done nothing for Britain’s most famous citizen detained overseas, Jimmy Lai, save to ensure he remains in prison”.

Lord Neuberger of Abbotsbury sat on Jimmy Lai’s case

It said that in 2024, Neuberger sat on the Hong Kong court’s panel when it upheld Lai’s conviction and imprisonment for participating in an “unauthorised” 2019 assembly.

Regarding Neuberger’s position at Prisoners Abroad, the campaigners noted that, after that ruling, he resigned as chairman of the panel of legal experts advising the Media Freedom Coalition. They also noted that he remained president of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law (BIICL), which promotes a “safe world where the rule of law is upheld and human rights respected”.

Tomas Roberto, a senior figure at the campaign group, told The Times: “Lord Neuberger’s continued presence on Hong Kong’s court of final appeal and positions as patron of Prisoners Abroad and president of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law represents the rankest hypocrisy.”

Roberto called on Neuberger to “resign immediately from Hong Kong’s kangaroo courts or relinquish his roles at Prisoners Abroad and the BIICL. He cannot credibly serve all three at the same time without distracting from the British institutions’ vital work.”

Neuberger became a law lord in 2007 and was appointed master of the rolls, the top civil law judge in England and Wales, in 2009. By 2012, the law lords had been replaced by the Supreme Court and he served as its president until he retired in 2017. Campaigners remain confused by his insistence on remaining on the Hong Kong bench.

Neuberger has maintained that he retained his role on the court, founded by the 1997 UK-China transition treaty, at the behest of the lawyers in the territory. He told The Times that he did not believe there was any conflict between his role as a judge and as a patron of Prisoners Abroad.

The BIICL declined to comment. Prisoners Abroad did not respond to a request for comment.

SOPHIE RAWORTH/INSTAGRAM

Running mate Sophie Raworth, the BBC newsreader, finished the 67.5-mile CCC race through the Alps to Chamonix at the weekend, bumping into a fellow Briton

Faces of the flood: Nepalis search photos of dead for missing relatives

The number of people unaccounted for has leapt to almost 5,000, **David Brown** reports from Kathmandu

ROJAN SHRESTHA FOR THE TIMES; DANIEL CENG/ANADOLU/GETTY IMAGES

Relatives of the missing inspect pictures outside a hospital in Kathmandu. Smriti Nepali, her younger sister Joyti Pariyar and their nephew Prince, right, have been looking for a cousin for five days. Left, Diva Magar Rai, three, recovers after being rescued in Nuwakot district

Hanging outside the mortuary of Kathmandu's main teaching hospital are photographs of dozens of victims of Nepal's devastating floods.

Some of the decomposing remains are complete bodies. A few are almost indistinguishable. From their size, it is possible to tell they include adults, children and babies.

A man's mouth has been pulled open to show a gold tooth, a silver pendant hangs from a woman's neck, and a severed arm features a tattoo. A child's body is naked apart from a blue school tie around his neck.

The photographs focus on distinguishing features. Each body is accompanied by a piece of paper with a handwritten reference number and details of where it was found.

The dead are separated from the living by a busy narrow road outside the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital post-mortem block.

On the other side of the traffic are hundreds of colourful posters appealing for help in locating the missing.

They show couples at weddings, a mother holding her baby, young men posing with cars, girls giggling together, stern images from work passes and large family groups with their arms around each other. All are missing since the flood that swept down from the border with Tibet on Wednesday.

By yesterday search teams had recovered 919 bodies but 4,793 people were still missing, including 33 British tourists. The number of missing is a sharp rise from the 2,502 announced on Sunday.

Smriti Nepali, 23, her sister, Joyti Pariyar, 31, and nephew, Prince, four, inspected pictures of the dead in search of their cousin. Raj Kumar Nepali works in finance and was at his office in Betrawati when the flood hit.

"It was very painful to look at the photographs of all the bodies, but if he is dead, we want to find him and give him a proper funeral," said Nepali. "We are still hopeful he is alive and have been looking for him for five days."

Bishal Khatiwada, 28, came to remove a photograph of his cousin, Diwananda Subedi, 38. Subedi, a driver for a tour company, was swept away at the border crossing to Tibet along with many of the missing British tourists who were on a Hindu pilgrimage.

Subedi's wife was searching a police website when she thought she recognised her husband. She asked police for a higher-resolution image, which confirmed her fears. On Friday, she travelled to the morgue at Pokorah with her 12-year-old son, and they identified his body. Subedi received a traditional Hindu cremation the next day.

Khatiwada said: "I have removed the photograph of my cousin because I did not want anyone else to be confused. We have confirmed his identity and he has had his funeral. I hope other families also find their loved ones and peace."

Relatives of missing foreigners were told by police yesterday that they must provide a DNA profile from a parent or child obtained from an authorised laboratory in their own country to check against unidentified bodies.

Ritu Dangol, 32, is being treated in hospital after she was rescued from the rubble of her guesthouse in Timeru Timure. Her sister-in-law Prabha Manandhar, 35, was working in the kitchen of a hotel when she noticed "a strange mist" and went outside to be told of "big flood" heading towards the town.

She escaped to higher ground and, when the waters subsided, found a scene of devastation. She began to hunt for Dangol among the thick mud that had swallowed her guesthouse. "There were bodies everywhere; it was horrible," she said. "We were shouting Ritu's name, and then we saw her climb out of the rubble." Dangol was evacuated to hospital with a severe ankle injury.

How she survived is a mystery. "She says she does not want to remember. All we know is it is a miracle," said Manandhar, who is tending to her sister-in-law in hospital.

Rescuers blast tunnels in search for hundreds of hydro workers

David Brown

Rescue teams were trying to reach hundreds of trapped workers by using controlled explosions yesterday while searching tunnels used by hydropower stations high in the Himalayas.

Officials said the focus of the rescue operation was to reach the 933 workers believed to be trapped at 11 hydropower projects. Many were working in about half a dozen tunnels.

They have been trapped since a deluge of mud, debris and ice sealed the tunnel entrances on Wednesday. The Nepali army said search-and-rescue teams were blasting and using earth-moving equipment to clear the entrances in the Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts close to the border with Tibet.

Videos shared by Nepal's rescue teams, helped by Chinese and Indian experts, showed soldiers working by torchlight to create a large pit in an attempt to find space to enter a tunnel.

Priya Kharel hoped that her brother, Milan, an engineer at Upper Trishuli-1 Hydropower Project, was trapped in a tunnel. "Those who have come back have said there are people in the tunnel," she told the BBC. "So I hope he can be rescued if the army finds them soon."

Jyoti Upadhyay from Ceredigion, west Wales, told the broadcaster that she was waiting for news about Jit Bahadur Chaudhary, a close friend who was working at the Trishuli-3B site.

"Since Saturday we have lost hope," she said. "What we understand is that all the buildings are under metres of mud and it has been impossible to search for anyone there."

Rescuers recovered three bodies after entering two tunnels at power plants. Raja Ram Basnet, a Nepali army spokesman, said: "A large amount of debris has been deposited and that is posing us a big challenge to open the tunnels."

The office of Balendra Shah, Nepal's prime minister, said on Sunday that blasting was being carried out to rescue 35 people believed to be trapped inside the tunnel of the Upper Trishuli 3A Hydropower Project in Nuwakot.

Rescuers cleared away 30ft of mud before creating a hole at the tunnel entrance but "when the team descended using ropes and called out, [it] received no response from inside".

At another tunnel rescuers reached about 330ft inside only to find it completely blocked.

About 280 hydropower workers have been saved. Hopes that other survivors can be found alive have been fuelled by reports that on Friday police pulled a six-year-old girl from the debris of a ruined building in the village of Timure close to the hydropower plants.

News

Can't they let it be? Fight to save street garden near Abbey Road

Tash Mosheim

A grandmother has been ordered to remove a long-established street garden around the corner from Abbey Road studios, after her council said it was attracting antisocial behaviour.

Katharine Hoskyns, 89, a retired teacher, has spent 25 years transforming the space outside her home in St John's Wood, northwest London, with pots of tomatoes, geraniums and herbs, as well as a bench where neighbours stop to talk.

The plants have become such a familiar feature that the Abbey Road orchestra, from the studios where the Beatles recorded most of their albums, have nicknamed the street "The Pots", she said.

Westminster city council has begun formal action over the garden after receiving what it described as a series of residents' complaints, saying that moving the bench would help to reduce "recent disturbance" in the area.

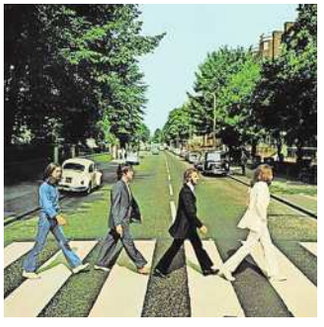
Hoskyns, who has lived on Hamilton Gardens, a cul-de-sac, since the 1960s, disputed the council's account and said that only one neighbour objected to the garden. "There is just one person who doesn't like it," she said. "They thought there was antisocial behaviour on the bench. There is no antisocial behaviour."

An e-bike parking bay on the street has also been removed in the past few months after neighbours allegedly complained that it was attracting antisocial behaviour.

Hoskyns, a mother of three, began creating the garden after parking spaces were installed outside her home. She said: "The council put in parking, so I had cars parked outside my house where I used to have a nice space. I decided, instead of being miserable about it, I was going to make the space nice again. I love it because I can go and potter around with my pots and people come up and talk to me. It is nice and sociable."

JAMES LINSELL CLARK/SWNS

Katharine Hoskyns tends her pots just around the corner from the Abbey Road crossing featured on the Beatles album



In a letter sent at the end of July, the council said that it had received complaints from a member of the local community and raised safety concerns about the garden. It said that fallen pots could injure people using the pavement or damage vehicles parked nearby and that the bench had not been confirmed as "structurally safe".

It added that, despite discussing the issue with Hoskyns's family over a "considerable period of time, with offers of help from the council, there has not been sufficient effort to remove the number of pots or remove the bench".

Hoskyns said she was really upset by the letter and insisted that the garden did not block the pavement. "It doesn't cause obstruction, there is plenty of room for a wheelchair," she said.

Her family have joined her fight to keep the garden, gathering 190 signatures in person for a petition opposing its removal.

Her son, Nicky Hoskyns, 58, said: "Everybody we have spoken to loves the pots ... It looks like it is a battle that we can win, and we need some little wins at the moment. It would be such a shame if we lost them. The area would be horrible without them, you really would start to get problems."

The council has previously installed a camera near the garden to monitor reports of antisocial behaviour. Hoskyns claims that it did not uncover any problems.

The deadline for the garden to be removed has passed without any action being taken, but Hoskyns expects the dispute to continue. "The neighbours volunteer and help a lot," she said. "It is a community thing as well as for me."

Westminster city council said: "Following a series of resident complaints and attempts to resolve this dispute informally over several years, the council was, reluctantly, obliged to begin a formal process. Residents should be able to live without antisocial behaviour impacting on their lives. Moving this bench will help reduce the recent disturbance in the area. We remain hopeful that we can resolve the situation amicably."

Warming up pottery will show if it is hot property

Kaya Burgess Science Correspondent

Taking an ancient piece of pottery and heating the precious artefact to over 112C may seem like a way to ruin it, but it may actually be the best way to check it is not a modern fake.

Scientists have devised an ingenious test to help archaeologists tell whether their pottery is a priceless relic or a far more recent ceramic creation.

The key lies hidden deep inside the clay itself, within magnetic particles that leave a telltale imprint about when the artefact was made.

When pottery is fired, iron-bearing minerals within the clay such as magnetite act like miniature compass needles. Their magnetic signature points towards wherever the Earth's magnetic North Pole was when the item was made, and remains locked even when the item is moved into new positions relative to the Earth's magnetic field.

The signatures of the smaller particles do not lock into a permanent alignment, however, and remain freer to rotate and drift. If the pottery lies buried for centuries, the signatures will gradually realign to point towards wherever the North Pole lies now relative to its burial place, a phenomenon known as viscous remanent magnetisation.

Researchers from the University of California San Diego have found that this magnetic alignment can be reset when the pottery is heated. Their key discovery, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences journal, found that pottery that is more than 1,000 years old has to be heated to more than 112C before this alignment can be reset. For newer pottery, it takes place at far lower temperatures.

Researchers took a variety of items, some known to be over a millennium old, others known to be modern replicas bought from souvenir shops in Jerusalem, plus confiscated artefacts whose authenticity had been questioned.

All were heated at 50C, with the temperature increased in 10C increments. There was no risk of harm, because pottery is kiln-fired at more than 600C.

The scientists were able to reach their conclusion thanks to computing power that had not been available previously, working with researchers from the University of Liverpool.

Their study highlights that some forgery trials have collapsed owing to a lack of conclusive evidence that the artefacts had been faked.

Range Rover ventures into EV market

Mark Ludlow

Range Rover is launching its first fully electric model, as car makers compete with an influx of Chinese models entering the UK market.

While Jaguar and Ferrari faced a backlash after launches of their respective EV models, the company is confident the new Range Rover Electric — which will sell for between £130,000 and £150,000 — will find its market.

Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), which is owned by the Indian conglomerate Tata Motors, said the Range Rover Electric would be built at its manufacturing plant in Solihull in the West Midlands.

Martin Limpert, managing director of Range Rover, said the new model was the result of ten years of development.

The launch of the Range Rover Electric is part of a large-scale transformation of JLR's plant and other sites across the West Midlands, including new battery and electric drive unit production lines and the reskilling of the workforce for electrification. About 9,000 employees in Solihull have been trained in electrification and a further 1,500 trained across the West Midlands.

JLR's Electric Propulsion Manufacturing Centre in Wolverhampton now produces battery packs, electric drive units and internal combustion engines.

Both Jaguar and Ferrari have faced criticism over their EV models from their loyal customers.

Last year Jaguar attempted a radical rebrand to launch its EV model. It was criticised for a 30-second advert that did not feature a car or its famous logo. Despite the public scrutiny, Jaguar said it was still committed to moving away from petrol cars to EVs.

Battery electric vehicles are expected to account for 27.5 per cent of market share in the UK by the end of the year, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT).

This is still short of the 33 per cent mandated target for 2026 under the UK's zero-emission vehicles (ZEV) mandate. But EVs are becoming increasingly popular in the UK, driven by the influx of cheaper Chinese models, such as BYD, Jaecoo and Leapmotor.

Chinese brands are on track to account for a fifth of new vehicles on Britain's roads as soon as next year, highlighting the challenges facing western car manufacturers. The number of Chinese companies selling into the UK is set to double from 13 to almost 30.

Father saved son by giving part of his liver and bowel

A father who donated part of his liver and bowel to his son in an "extremely rare" transplant has described it as the "greatest privilege" of his life.

Gary Jackson's son Harry, six, received the transplant at King's College Hospital in London and is believed to be one of only about ten children worldwide to undergo the procedure.

Harry was born with malrotation, an abnormality of the bowel that occurs when the baby is in the womb.

Volvulus is a life-threatening complication of malrotation and occurs when the bowel twists so the blood supply to that part of the bowel is cut off.

Harry also developed intestinal failure-associated liver disease, a progressive condition caused by years of receiving an intravenous form of feeding.

Gary and Harry's mother Annie, from Cambridge, met doctors at King's to discuss the possibility of a liver and bowel transplant. In January last year, Gary underwent a 17-hour operation to donate 20 per cent of his liver and 1.5m of small intestine to his son, who is now recovering.

"The journey to surgery wasn't easy," he said. "I had to lose six stone, follow a strict diet, completely give up alcohol.

"It remains the greatest privilege of my life, and I would do it all again."

About three in 100 liver transplants in the UK are from living donors and the majority of these are for children.

Fakers who pay £400 for empty boxes

Shayma Bakht

Listings for luxury packaging — without any items inside — may appear an enigma of the online retail world.

On the likes of eBay, Vinted and Facebook Marketplace are hundreds of listings for empty boxes, priced in some cases at hundreds and even thousands of pounds each.

Research by The Times found accounts registered in Britain attempting to sell packaging for brands such as Rolex, Hermès and Louis Vuitton for up to £400 each. Some international accounts are selling Hermès packaging for as much as $3,000.

Paper bags and velvet dust bags are sold alongside the boxes.

However, experts have warned that these UK resellers are helping the counterfeit underworld.

The Fashion Law Institute, a non-profit organisation for international lawyers and designers, confirmed there was a market for empty luxury packaging and that it was "something that the anti-counterfeiting community has paid attention to for a long time" because it offered "an additional detail of legitimacy" to those selling fake goods online.

"The packaging is psychology — it's part of the luxury experience ... it builds the anticipation," Susan Scafidi, a professor in fashion law and the head of the institute, said. The packaging also made counterfeiting easier, she added.

Resellers are able to make hundreds of pounds selling empty boxes for Rolex watches and sets of empty perfume packaging.

"It is a whole underworld that we are talking about [and] that is a great concern," Scafidi said. "Super-fake" luxury items had been connected to criminal networks, terrorist organisations and slave labour, she said.

Counterfeiting is a £1.5 trillion industry and fake luxury items are estimated to make up 70 per cent of it.

In the US, most of the fake luxury goods go through the postal system, underlining the role played by packaging. One eBay seller who sold several empty packages said they were neither aware nor concerned about who was purchasing the items.

It has been suggested that influencers may also buy these empty boxes as props to reflect an image of success to their audiences, and some owners of luxury items may wish to buy packaging in order to resell their items legitimately at higher prices.

A source from the Global Anti-Counterfeiting Group, a coalition of networks combating the global trade of counterfeit goods, confirmed there had been conversations about regulation of the resale of packaging.

Scafidi suggested that many paper bags, boxes and dusters sold online could also be fake because it was possible to counterfeit the boxes "if you're counterfeiting on a small scale".

The consumer group Which? said that intellectual property and counterfeit goods had been among the areas deprioritised most by trading standards in Britain in recent years.

A spokesman said police teams were "severely under-resourced to tackle the flood of counterfeits appearing both online and in physical stores. The government needs to overhaul the consumer enforcement system so these crimes are actually investigated."

Branded packaging helps fraudsters to make counterfeits look legitimate

TMS

diary@thetimes.co.uk | @timesdiary

Sunak's take on PMQs

Rishi Sunak may not go down in history as one of our most successful prime ministers, but he was certainly one of the brainiest. In fact, it seems like he was something of a Mastermind. In the new book *Sunak at 10*, it is revealed that the beleaguered PM attempted to improve the esprit de corps in Downing Street by hosting a quiz night in the state rooms. "He devised the questions himself," said one source. "He even had a Taylor Swift round." If only Boris Johnson had had similar instincts, then *Champagne Problems* might have been a correct answer rather than a cause for Sue Gray to investigate.

DOLLY POWER

Last week we reported on the time when Ed Balls, as schools secretary, was charmed by the singer Dolly Parton, who was a champion of child literacy. Now Sir Peter Wanless, then a director at Balls's department, has told *Civil Service World* that Parton perhaps led the minister astray from his official advice. Wanless briefed Balls before this meeting, and feared the minister would "be susceptible to Parton's world-class charm and powers of persuasion". Wanless gave Balls clear directions, including an official line and some fallback positions. Then the meeting got under way. "Within two minutes ... Balls had conceded every possible fallback short of giving in completely, during an obviously awestruck opening exchange," Wanless said. At least the mandarin got a selfie out of it.

Margaret Thatcher's fierce supporter Norman Tebbit was not a fan of the BBC, but he could find reasons to praise it. For instance, when John Major called a Tory leadership election in 1995, the Beeb urgently sent for their correspondent Jon Sopel, but he was at Lord's, drinking beer, in shorts. Sopel told the View from the Boundary *podcast that he got a taxi to Selfridges where a helpful lady kitted him out in 20 minutes. When Tebbit, below, got word of his story, the Tory big beast wrote a newspaper article praising the good sense of the BBC man. "Blimey," thought Sopel, "I've never normally had any words of praise from Norman Tebbit." This warm feeling didn't last long. Sopel soon learnt that Tebbit may have been motivated by his position as a director of Selfridges' parent company.*

MIDNIGHT'S CHESS GAME

The author Salman Rushdie's love of cinema became a problem after he was attacked in 2022. He tells the October issue of *Sight and Sound* that, in the 24 hours when his life hung in the balance, he dreamt that he was in Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*, and saw himself playing a winner-takes-all game of chess with Death. Rushdie's subconscious wasn't giving him much of a chance. "My chess game had deteriorated rapidly since college days," he says. He still beat the Grim Reaper, but this is where it pays to be more lowbrow. If he'd been a fan of *Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey*, he could have taken Death on at Cluedo.

After running a series of jokes about Morningside, the posh part of Edinburgh, it seems only fair to conclude with one about Glasgow. A young priest lost his bearings in the city and unfortunately ended up in the red-light district. A lady of the night saw an opportunity for defrocking and approached him with the words "Would you like super sex?" The priest blushed before replying "If it's all the same to you, I'll have the soup."

JACK BLACKBURN

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News

Mission to grasp the odd-shaped Martian moon

GETTY IMAGES; TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD POHLE

Mars with its moons Phobos and Deimos. Sara Russell, left, hopes to study samples from Phobos

Kaya Burgess Science Correspondent

Mystery and outlandish theories have long surrounded Phobos, the small, light and oddly shaped moon that orbits Mars: could it be hollow? Is it actually a spaceship? Is it made from shards of the planet?

One British scientist hopes to help end the debate. A spacecraft will be launched next month, arriving at Phobos next summer before attempting a landing on the surface of the moon to scoop up some of its soil. Samples will be flown back to Earth for analysis, arriving by July 2031.

The mission will be the first landing on a Martian moon and the first time samples have been flown back to Earth from the Martian system.

Sara Russell, a cosmic mineralogist and planetary scientist at the Natural History Museum, serves on the science board for the mission and will play a key role in analysing the samples.

She said: "How Phobos formed is a massive mystery. It's quite a small body, it's 20km across and it's sort of potato-shaped. Its density is less than 2g per cubic centimetre, which is less than any rock. It must have a very high porosity. And there were some crazy theories a hundred years ago that either it was hollow or it was actually an artificial spaceship that had aliens living inside." She added: "We now don't think this is the case."

The main theory for how Phobos and Deimos, the other moon that orbits Mars, formed is that they were asteroids or comets that "got too close to Mars and got captured by its gravity", Russell said.

There is a problem with this hypothesis. Phobos is in a neatly circular orbit, level with Mars's equator. It is what you would expect from a natural moon. You would expect to find a captured asteroid in a more elliptical orbit on an angled plane, depending on its original trajectory as it flew by Mars.

This gave rise to another theory: that a rock once smashed into Mars, throwing out a ring of debris that coalesced to form the moons.

Russell, who has studied samples from asteroids, is a European Space Agency representative working with Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency on the mission, which will beat Nasa in returning Martian samples to our planet. It will launch at 7.41pm UK time on October 19 from Tanegashima Space Centre, southwest Japan.

Nasa's Perseverance rover has been travelling around the Jezero Crater on Mars since 2021, taking rock samples in the hope they may one day be collected and analysed for signs of life. However, funding concerns have delayed plans for a return mission to retrieve them.

Russell, a Cambridge graduate who joined the Natural History Museum in 1998, said of the Japanese mission: "We're hoping it'll be the first sample return from the Mars neighbourhood." Analysis will assess the structure and metal content, teaching Russell and her team-mates whether Phobos is an asteroid or a former part of Mars.

She added: "It will tell us fundamental things about planetary architecture and how things move around the solar system and how planets and small bodies get formed. How common is it that asteroids like this come into the inner solar system? Do they bring with them ices and things that [helped to create] a habitable Earth and Mars?"

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Women laid low by 'invisible illness'

Poppy Koronka Health Correspondent

A rare "invisible illness" has become much more common since the pandemic but diagnoses are being delayed because women are told symptoms are "all in their heads", experts have said.

Postural tachycardia syndrome (Pots) is a little-known condition that has had a large increase in cases since Covid-19, a phenomenon experts believe could be due to its link to post-viral fatigue.

According to Pots UK, as few as 1.7 in 1,000 people have the condition. Cases are more common in those also diagnosed with long Covid.

Ella Mills, founder of the nutrition brand Deliciously Ella and daughter of the grocery heiress Camilla Sainsbury, is among several high-profile women who have spoken of their diagnosis. Mills, 35, previously explained how, at the age of 21, she started suffering from symptoms including chronic fatigue, digestive issues and pain "everywhere".

She told Good Housekeeping: "I didn't feel sad. I didn't feel anything. I just didn't care. I had no autonomy over my body. No friends. No purpose. No future. I thought that if I was depressed, I'd be crying, emotional or sad. I had a year of nothingness. I had no sense of purpose. I was just at home, rotting."

Solange Knowles, the singer and sister of Beyoncé, was diagnosed with Pots in 2018. She described the condition as "debilitating, confusing and lonely".

"Pots is a malfunction of the way in which the [automatic] nervous system regulates the systems within our body — [the ones] that we do not have to think about, such as heart rate and blood pressure control," Dr Lesley Kavi, a former GP and chair of Pots UK, said. "In many cases it is thought to be due to damage in the small nerves that control blood-vessel narrowing. It is likely that when affected people stand up, they are unable to maintain blood circulation against gravity to their heart and brain."

Ella Mills, founder of Deliciously Ella, was diagnosed with Pots aged 21

Symptoms include dizziness, heart palpitations, chest pain, shortness of breath, shaking and sweating, and fainting. The syndrome can also affect the digestive system, according to NHS England, and cause headaches, fatigue and brain fog. It is more common in women, but researchers are not sure why.

"Half of patients are told that their symptoms are all in their head," Kavi said. "When they describe so many symptoms at one time, and the doctors don't think to test for Pots, they assume the problem is psychological."

This is an experience Sarah Fender, 37, knows well. An admin assistant in the NHS, Fender has been experiencing symptoms of Pots since her teenage years. "I'd have symptoms of feeling faint, being sick quite often, just generally not feeling quite well and had various tests over the years. I had one GP tell me that some girls just faint sometimes," she recalled.

Fender, from London, was diagnosed in 2019 after years of tests. The long wait for a diagnosis comes with its own dangers. One of the more debilitating symptoms of Pots is frequent fainting spells, which could occur at any time.

Pots, like many conditions affecting young women, is often labelled as a condition of social contagion, where some believe people self-diagnose with the condition after seeing it on social media. However, Pots UK said in a statement that it was a "real, diagnosable condition". It added: "Pots has clear diagnostic criteria and predominantly impacts females aged 15-50 but can affect males and people of any age."

El Niño threatens disaster for coral

GETTY IMAGES

Prolonged warm seas can trigger coral bleaching. Such events have become more frequent, giving reefs shorter intervals in which to recover

The "super" El Niño building in the Pacific Ocean could have a calamitous impact on coral reefs, researchers have warned, as they reported that a key type of coral had plummeted over the past 40 years (Adam Vaughan writes).

The natural weather pattern, which is set to be the most powerful on record, is associated with warmer air and sea temperatures.

Prolonged warm seas can trigger coral bleaching events, leading it to turn white. While coral can recover from bleaching, some die too.

The world's oceans had their warmest day on record on August 22, owing to a combination of climate change and El Niño.

"The fact that global ocean temperatures are already breaking records, just as a powerful El Niño is developing, is deeply concerning for coral reefs," said Dr Manuel Gonzalez Rivero at the Australian Institute of Marine Science. "Our 40-year record shows a very clear pattern: when strong marine heatwaves drive global bleaching events, we see substantial declines in hard coral cover."

Hard coral are the 3D skeletons that tiny animals called polyps build, which build up into reefs thronged by colourful fish.

Gonzalez Rivero and experts at the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network tracked the proportion of reefs covered by living hard corals between 1980 and 2024. Relatively, it fell by almost a tenth, from 30.2 per cent between 1980 and 2009 to 27.3 per cent between 2020 and 2024.

A report by Gonzalez Rivero and colleagues, published yesterday, found that the escalating frequency of global bleaching was to blame for the downward spiral.

He said: "What makes the situation particularly worrying now is not simply the intensity of one El Niño, but how little recovery time reefs are being given between major disturbances.

"In the past, reefs might have had a decade or more between mass bleaching events. We are now seeing gaps of only five or six years."

A separate study, published in the journal Science, suggested that climate change was making El Niño events more frequent and intense.

A University of Michigan team arrived at the conclusion after deriving a thousand years of Pacific sea temperatures from corals in the Galápagos.

Going Dutch could solve Neet crisis

Daisy Eastlake Political Reporter

Ministers could save £15 billion a year on welfare payments and lost tax revenue if they replicated the system used in the Netherlands to encourage young people into work, a report has found.

The paper, by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), a think tank, said Britain could save billions by "going Dutch" with the welfare state.

Plans would include restricting mental health benefits to severe cases for young people and paying 30 per cent of their salaries if they are hired after not working or studying.

An estimated 981,000 people aged 16-24 were not in education, training or employment (Neet) in the three months to June. Alan Milburn, the former Labour health secretary who is advising the government on youth unemployment, is said to be considering the Dutch system.

The Netherlands has one of the lowest Neet rates in the world, at 5 per cent, compared with about 15 per cent in the UK. The interim Milburn Review, published earlier this year, estimated that each Neet costs £22,571 per year in lost tax revenue and higher government spending. The CSJ said that reducing Britain's rate to Dutch levels would get 671,608 people into work or training, saving the taxpayer £15.2 billion.

The report suggested that the UK should create a "technical baccalaureate", a set of GCSE qualifications prioritising subjects such as computer science, design and technology, and construction. Andy Burnham, the prime minister, has committed to a radical shift away from the traditional curriculum by prioritising vocational education as the "first choice" for many children beginning their GCSEs. He accused previous governments of devaluing practical skills in favour of academic subjects.

The report also highlighted the North East of England, where more than half of all Neets claiming universal credit are not required to work and mental health-related benefits claims have soared. Ben Gregg, head of welfare at the CSJ, said: "The North East shows how bad Britain's Neets crisis could get. Whole communities have been abandoned to worklessness and deprivation.

"But it also shows a way forward. If we can solve the Neet issue in the North East, we can solve it anywhere. The government must reform welfare, rewire the education system and back local leaders in areas like the North East to boost regional growth and get young people into jobs."

Social care 'stealth tax' leaves families £12,000 worse off

Aubrey Allegretti
Chief Political Correspondent

Families are facing a social care "stealth tax" that has cost them up to £12,350 this year, new analysis shows.

Under the current system, support is means tested, meaning that only those with capital assets under £23,250 are eligible for taxpayer-funded services. However, the threshold has been frozen since 2010 and has lagged significantly behind inflation.

One immediate measure to alleviate the pressure on poorer families was suggested by the King's Fund. The think tank calculated that if ministers had uprated the threshold in line with rising prices, then the figure would stand at £35,600 for the current financial year.

Simon Bottery, senior fellow for social care at the King's Fund, told The Times that the 15-year freeze to thresholds was "just one symptom of an unfair social care system resulting from reform being put off for decades".

"Wholesale reform is now needed," he added.

A government spokesperson said that "too many people are currently being let down by a broken social care system, including the millions of unpaid carers with no option but to look after their loved ones themselves".

They added: "That is why this government is creating a national care service for everyone who needs it."

News

Public barred from forests over wildfires

Adam Vaughan Environment Editor

The Forestry Commission stopped public access to some of its forests this summer over fears that warning signs would not avoid the risk of people accidentally starting wildfires.

Baroness Young of Old Scone, chair of the commission, said its 1,500 woods in England had suffered a "shedload" of fires, many not publicly reported.

There have been closures on its land in the New Forest, Wykeham Forest in North Yorkshire, Colliers' Wood near Manchester and Shouldham in Norfolk due to blazes and the risk of more. "It was just too risky to have people and the risk of ignition," Young said.

Public access to the organisation's 250,000-plus acres of land is a key part of its mission, so access is curbed reluctantly and rarely.

The Dunwich Heath fire on National Trust and RSPB land in Suffolk last month menaced neighbouring land, as did the New Forest fire started by a vehicle ablaze. Young said the organisation might need to consider wider firebreaks next to roads through its land as a precaution.

In her first interview with a national newspaper since taking over in February, the Labour peer and environmentalist said this summer's record fires showed the need for more reservoirs and lakes in woodlands. "We used to hold a lot of woodland reservoirs. The problem is that they were all built in Victorian times and they're beginning to show their age," she said. Firefighters in the New Forest had to use a five-mile hose to pump water from a lake.

The forestry chief said Britain also needed better access to aerial firefighting support, given the remoteness of many woodlands. "We absolutely have to do something about having access to helicopters," Young said.

Andy Burnham is considering banning disposable barbecue sales during the summer months. Young said it was worth considering whether they should ever be sold. "They're a hazard."

Young was speaking during a visit to Stourhead woodland in Wiltshire, where the peace was pierced only by the call of one of six breeding pairs of goshawks. The biodiverse woods are a mixture of Douglas firs several hundred feet tall and other conifers that have been harvested for timber by the Hoare family for centuries. Unlike some drab Forestry Commission land dominated by rows of conifers, Stourhead has broadleaf trees mixed in.

While large gaps are created on commission land when trees are felled for timber, the Wiltshire site uses "continuous cover forestry", maintaining a forestry canopy. Foresters harvest trees only singly or in small groups, creating small gaps in the canopy.

Young and colleagues see this as a model to emulate. Trials are under way on public land in the south and southwest. Such forests are more resilient to a warming climate, and nicer to visit.

Copying Stourhead's success at scale will require the commission to persuade the public that much tougher controls are needed for deer and grey squirrels, Young said. Grey squirrels strip bark, while deer browse on young trees, stopping them from establishing.

While Britain will never be self-sufficient for timber production, Young said the country could do better than importing 80 per cent of its timber, as it has done for many years. She would like trees to be treated as critical national infrastructure on a par with roads, and called for a target for the use of timber frames in social housing.

Reflecting on this summer's extreme weather, which the Met Office and scientists have linked to climate change, Young said she had often been left feeling like Private James Frazer in *Dad's Army*, whose catchphrase was "We're doomed!" Still, she said: "It's like any challenge. You might not win. But giving up is not an option."

ANTHONY DEVLIN FOR THE TIMES

Designer refashions abandoned festival tents

'There's no such thing as the tent fairy" is what many festivalgoers need to learn as thousands of reusable tents are abandoned every year, according to one young designer (Eleanor Tait writes).

Jess O'Riley, 25, puts the phrase on her tote bags, made entirely from the tent materials that she salvages from British festival sites. O'Riley's mission is to tackle the misconception that tents left behind will be reused or go to charity.

She was "blown away" by the waste she saw on her first hunt for reusable materials while studying at Manchester Fashion Institute. "It was like every camper just evaporated," she said. "There are fields on fields of tents, entire campsites still set up, but they've been abandoned and all that material goes to waste." O'Riley transformed a student showcase of festival waste fashion into a brand, J.O. Studio, which is based in the city and has 50,000 social media followers. She also sells T-shirts, vests and washbags.

O'Riley will appear at this year's Manchester Fashion Week — but her ultimate aim is as bold as her colourful designs.

"I want to put myself out of business in five years," she said. "My aim is that if there are no festival tents left behind, then there's no material left for me to use. What I don't want to encourage is the myth that if you leave your tent behind someone will take it, because most of the time, it will end up in landfill."

Jess O'Riley with washbags sold by J.O. Studio. Reading festival staff were clearing up discarded tents yesterday

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Untrendy classics suddenly seem refreshing
James Marriott
Page 19

Comment

The Army's Reserve has become a mockery

Vital force is depleted and underresourced: ministers must find the political will both to fund it and restore its prestige

One sunny morning, 60-odd summers ago, I stood before the open hatch of an RAF Beverley transport gazing without enthusiasm — frankly, with naked terror — at lush green Oxfordshire 600 feet below. "STAND ... in the door!" shouted the dispatcher, just audible above the roar of the engines. Then, to each successive man of the 40 in the aircraft, "Go! Go! Go!"

For less than a minute we hung in the sky under parachute canopies, weapons containers swinging on ropes beneath us, then hit the ground with varied degrees of inelegance. "Gor!" exulted a perky Cockney. "It's better than sex!" As a 17-year-old officer cadet of the Parachute Regiment TA, I had no evidence from which to assess that proposition.

All I knew, a week later, was that like every other trainee I grew a foot in stature when we were presented with the badges that distinguished us, qualified parachutists, from lesser mortals — "craphats". "Remember," said the commanding officer in his parting words to us, as to every graduate parade. "Always sit on the left side of the bus!" — so the girls could see the wings on our right shoulders.

My point, in rehearsing this fragment of ancient history, is that once upon a time being a member of the then 110,000-strong Territorial Army, now the Army Reserve, enabled us to do adventurous things that thrilled teenagers no end. We travelled to some faraway places, played with a lot of weapons, learnt much about camping, map-reading and compass-marching and tested ourselves against hardship and fear.

I have no idea what our training cost though it must have been plenty. But governments did not grudge the money because in that post-Second World War era it was taken for granted the nation needed young men with military skills. When the Cold War ended in 1990 the TA still mustered a strength of almost 73,000.

Yet the Reserves are now on the ropes. Last week The Times reported that their training has become subject to draconian restrictions to save cash. They aim to muster 34,000 part-timers yet have a paper strength 10,000 fewer. Of these, just 14,000 last year fulfilled the 27-day minimum training commitment and passed the skills tests to qualify for their annual bounty.

For would-be recruits there is a seven-month lag between application and induction. I recently found myself chatting to some Reserve paras who had been waiting four years to do the airborne course. University cadet corps turn away one-third of applicants — far more bright young men and women want to do officer training than the Ministry of Defence will fund.

> Just 14,000 last year fulfilled the 27-day minimum training

Most Reserve units have been stripped of their vehicles, and opportunities for live firing are meagre. Armouries at half of all 300 Reserve Centres have been declared unfit for use, and thus weapons must be stored elsewhere, in some cases hundreds of miles away.

It used to be said that while the British are not a militaristic people, we are a martial one. This is no longer true. Another Times story that caught my eye last week reported the drastic fall in value of the sort of pictures and ornaments with which the middle classes have traditionally filled our homes. I own some wonderful 19th-century military watercolours, now worth little because, in the words of a London dealer, "nobody wants soldiers on the wall any more".

How much does it matter that the nation, whether Tory or Labour-ruled, has become unwilling properly to fund either the regular army or the spare-time part to which I was proud to belong, albeit with absolute lack of distinction?

A cynic might say I got much more out of my time than the country got out of me. I learnt stuff about soldiers, weapons, rough living and tactics, which has been of priceless value to me as a war correspondent and then historian.

Sceptics such as Lord Heseltine say the Russians are not about to invade Yorkshire. Thus, he would not spend an extra penny on defence. I disagree, believing passionately in the importance of deterrence, not to mention the urgency of protecting ourselves against escalating Russian "grey zone" attacks.

But I can go with him this far: that skills such as I learnt all those years ago — parachuting, marksmanship, platoon attacks — are now almost all redundant. Vastly more advanced technical savvy is wanted. I recently read a report on a Nato exercise with Ukrainians in which the west European troops showed themselves to be embarrassingly fuddled when confronted with drone swarms such as have become a war-fighting norm.

And whatever armed threat we face, and whatever breed of warriors addresses it, we need more people and more hardware on land, at sea and in the air. Twenty years ago, General Sir Mike Jackson, then head of the army, said as we struggled in Iraq and Afghanistan: "Mass matters, and we don't have it." His successors have assured me for years they would build the Reserves into a credible reinforcement arm and I have told each one I did not believe a word of it.

LEON NEAL/GETTY IMAGES

Draconian cuts to the Reserves reflect our unwillingness to fund the military

"The offer", a phrase recruiters regard as central to their task, was not and is not good enough because the Reserves — like the regular army — are denied the resources, the toys of war to make them an effective fighting force.

The government needs to mobilise the political will to fund credible professional armed forces supported by substantial reserves. And these need to receive a respect from the community that is also today in short supply. Few people have anything to do with our soldiers and thus most know little about what manner of men and women they are, except that they read endless bleak stories about bullying, broken down aircraft carriers and sick-making fighting vehicles.

As for government, John Healey three months ago alleged that he resigned as defence secretary in principled protest at underfunding. Some of us, even then, saw instead a small mammal performing an Australian crawl away from Sir Keir Starmer's sinking ship.

> Respect to soldiers from the community is in short supply today

Now, as chancellor, Healey plans to postpone — let us be honest, abandon — the national commitment to raise defence spending to 3 per cent of GDP by 2030. In Burnhamland, La-La land, cash for Labour's client base — handouts such as win elections — trumps national security.

In 1963 I hitchhiked wearing battledress because I knew many people with a seat in their vehicles would thus give me a lift. Uniforms were familiar and, on the whole, deemed good news. Today my upraised thumb might get very tired indeed before I got a ride, least of all from any member of the Labour Party.

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Comment

Splintered right-wing vote could turn us green

Election in Dover shows that when three parties of the right compete, the left inevitably benefits

Melanie Phillips

@MELANIELATEST

A minor by-election held last week on Dover district council has enormous implications. Reform, which swept the board in local elections in Kent last year, was expected to win the seat for the Guston, Kingsdown and St Margaret's-at-Cliffe ward. After all, Dover is in the front line of the losing battle against the Channel small boats.

But even though the Tories, Reform and Restore won 55 per cent of the vote between them, the Greens, who gained just under 29 per cent, won the seat by 34 votes. So a constituency that wants gunboats at dawn to stop the invasion of inflatables ended up electing a party that thinks anyone who opposes mass immigration should be exiled from the human race.

This was because Restore scooped up 10 per cent and the Tories 17 per cent of the vote. It's obvious that this three-way split on the right will regularly deliver victory to the left. To avoid that, there needs to be some kind of electoral pact so the choice is only for one right-wing party.

But it's very hard to see that happening. Restore's Rupert Lowe wants to destroy Nigel Farage. Farage wants to destroy Kemi Badenoch. Badenoch, who wants to destroy Reform, is also aware that any pact she makes with it will toxify the Tories still further before they've even emerged from the decontamination tank. So there's a circular firing squad on the right.

Even if deals were to be done, Reform would still have another problem. Research by YouGov in February — ie, before the Burnham ascension — revealed that 60-77 per cent of Lib Dem, Green and Labour voters would vote tactically for each other to stop Reform winning a seat. But only 43-45 per cent of Reform voters would vote tactically for the Tories to fend off Labour, the Lib Dems or the Greens. And only 37-41

> In political engagement, conservatives are outgunned by their foes

per cent of Tory voters said they would vote tactically to stop the left.

This reflects a structural disadvantage for conservatives. When it comes to political engagement, they are outgunned and outclassed by their political foes.

In general, people have centre-right views because they value things like stability and connectedness which they find in the world of the everyday: work, family, neighbourhood. They have little patience for political activism and even less for the ideas behind it. Failing to engage with these ideas, they tend not to grasp the nature and scale of the threat they pose.

Above all, conservatives aren't animated by the driving belief on the left that they've been put on Earth to change the world for the better. That passion means those on the left work feverishly at the tactics and strategies necessary to gain power.

The centre right, whose view of politics ranges from indifference to disgust, tend to view an election as an irritating but necessary activity engaged in by consenting adults in private.

The left, for whom politics is life itself, treat an election as a war with military-style tactics, propaganda and discipline. They take part in interminable political meetings, plots and cabals on which no sensible person would waste their life. As a result, these activists gain political control. This is how the hard left have gained such influence in both Labour and the US Democratic Party.

In America, left-wing "community organisers" used unscrupulous tactics to bundle the working class down to the voting booths and thus got people to vote who'd never voted before. Similar strategically targeted activism characterises the "red-green" alliance between leftists and Islamists in both Britain and America. Conservative Americans are currently scratching their heads over the fact that so many extremists — both "communists" and Islamists — are winning so many elections.

The reason is they've put in the hard graft needed for victory. There don't need to be that many far leftists or Islamists. Galvanised by passionate intensity about their agenda, they are disproportionately involved in political engagement. That means using the electorate as a weapon. And that includes tactical voting.

Reform, however, has an additional problem. The more likely it looks that Farage might actually become prime minister, the more determined people will be to stop him. Close to one third of Labour voters say that in any two-way race between the Tories and Reform, they would even switch to the Tories to stop Farage. And in a seat where only the Lib Dems and Reform could win, almost one quarter of Tory voters would vote for the Lib Dems to stop him. It seems more likely that right-wingers will vote for left-wing parties to stop Farage than right-wingers will vote for other right-wingers.

If the parties of the right are to stand a chance against this pincer movement, they must urgently educate their supporters in the need to vote tactically against the left, with bespoke advice in every constituency on how to do so. For this they need an entirely new approach to political engagement and activism. It requires strategic thinking at the centre and an army of boots on the ground, to get out the vote and make sure people understand that if they put an X by their most favoured candidate they may end up electing the party they most fear.

Otherwise a country that has moved sharply to the right will wake up one morning to find it has elected a nightmare coalition of the left.

Giles Coren Notebook

Are my own books bad enough for Big Tech?

Say what you like about AI and the death of literature (or ask AI to say it for you), but for one small independent bookshop near me (and some authors who haven't sold a book in years), the hunger of artificial intelligence learning models appears to be providing a sales uptick in long-stagnant areas.

According to the Camden New Journal, bulk shipments of unlikely titles — including *A Biographical Dictionary of Jersey: Volume 2, by Francis LM Corbet* (1988) and *The Nootkan Indian: A Pictorial, by John Sendey* (1977) — have been flying out of Walden Books in Camden Town after decades on the shelves, in a way that its owner, David Tobin, can only put down to AI behemoths buying up arcane volumes to feed their language learning engines.

"It all seemed to happen at once about two or three months ago," he told the CNJ. "We sent [the books] to a forwarding agent in Canada, just over the American border near Detroit. They then forward them on; they have some sort of nondisclosure agreement. They won't tell us where they go."

One of these orders, he said, consisted of more books than he sells to humans in a week, including some he's had for 25 years that were so obscure even the charity shops wouldn't take them.

To feed the AI engines, books are stripped off the spine and the page stack dropped into a machine that reads the whole thing in seconds (almost as fast as James Marriott), banks the words to aid future literary production and cultural psychopathy, then discards the physical texts.

"This is not positive for me or the world," says Tobin, comparing AI's indifference to literature to the dystopic vision of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. "It's become this giant mill grinding up knowledge ... it's almost as if [literature has] become meaningless; they [only] want the words themselves."

He admits, however, that, "in the sense that it is selling books, yes, it is a positive — they're actually buying things that no one else wants". Which leads to the most pressing question of all: has this hunger for forgotten volumes led to any sales of *How to Eat Out* (2012), *Anger Management for Beginners* (2010) or, rarest and most unwanted of all, *Winkler* (2006). If not I might, at a price, be able to help. For until my own three genuinely unsellable books have been fed into the engine and taught it all the subtleties and grace notes of my particular art, I'm going to have to keep churning out this guff by myself.

Bone idol

A facial reconstruction of "Conquest Man", also known as "skeleton SKI863", made by Liverpool John Moores University's Face Lab and published in The Sunday Times this weekend, shows the careworn, deeply lined physiognomy of a middle-aged man who was alive during the Battle of Hastings. The rather disappointed look on his face can be ascribed, one assumes, to the fact that, despite having been in the queue for nearly 1,000 years he still has only a 50:50 chance of getting in to see the Bayeux Tapestry when it goes on show at the British Museum next week.

Days of blunder

The trend for making sequels to crap movies from the 1980s and 1990s in the hope that people will have forgotten how bad the originals were continues with *Days of Thunder 2*, which that hilarious old relic Tom Cruise, 64, has been out promoting, complete with his special new ageless chipmunk face, Rudy Giuliani hair colour and teenager's teeth out of a jar. One imagines that at his age, the rally car reboot will be mostly about how difficult driving is when your neck is too stiff to check your blind spot and you have to find somewhere to stop and wee every 25 minutes. And although Cruise famously does a lot of his own stunts, one assumes he will use a stand-in for all the getting-in-and-out-of-the-car shots (at 57, I struggle trying to bend into my Kia let alone a racing car).

But I wish him well and hope they get the movie shot quickly; it's not long till he has to renew his driving licence.

THUNDERER

SAS veterans who helped defeat IRA deserve protections

Al Carns

It is easy, from the safety of today, to forget how violent the Troubles were. More British military personnel were killed than in Iraq and Afghanistan combined. Civilians, police officers, soldiers, politicians and members of the royal family were all targets.

Put yourself in the shoes of a young serviceman several decades ago, operating in darkness and uncertainty against capable, disciplined and lethal terrorists, in an extraordinarily complex political and legal environment.

None of that places anyone above the law. Nor does it mean that every decision taken was right. But if we are going to judge those decisions decades later, we first have a duty to understand the environment in which they were made — and ensure accountability does not become punishment by process.

That is why Policy Exchange's new paper, The Special Air Service in Northern Ireland, is essential reading. It makes a powerful case that those who served there helped counter the IRA, protect life and create the conditions for political settlement. Drawing on first-hand testimony, it puts you alongside men deployed under ministerial authority, in support of the police and under the ordinary criminal law, sometimes with seconds to make decisions about life and death.

Every use of lethal force by the SAS was investigated at the time, and those who served were subject to the law. It is unfair to subject veterans to repeated investigation of the same events decades later simply because the process or legal standards have changed.

The Good Friday Agreement was a remarkable achievement. Painful compromises and extraordinary assurances secured peace. Nobody got everything they wanted. Everyone gave something up. That symmetry mattered.

Had those who negotiated the agreement known how the legacy process would operate, I find it difficult to believe they would have accepted practical finality for some while those sent by the state to protect life remained exposed to repeated legal process decades later.

Reconciliation was meant to allow Northern Ireland to move beyond the conflict, not litigate its history indefinitely in one direction.

The veterans of Operation Banner defeated the IRA. But the current legislation as it stands is in danger of losing the battle for historical memory, failing to honour those who fought to keep the peace. This will demoralise not just veterans of the forces who served during the Troubles but also the pro-Union majority in Northern Ireland — and will support those arguing for a united Ireland.

Al Carns is a former armed forces minister

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Untrendy classics suddenly seem refreshing

Notion of canonical books is against the egalitarian spirit of the age yet amid modern trivia they shine brighter than ever

James Marriott

@J_AMESMARRIOTT

Why read the classics? The question has inspired a great deal of rhetoric and bombast over the years. Some of the most enjoyably overconfident responses can be traced to teachers' handbooks in the decades after the Second World War. One, written for English teachers in the 1960s, was characteristic in declaring that the works of "great novelists, poets, and playwrights" possess "life-enhancing powers", capable of blasting away "ignorance, indolence, self-deceit or fashion". Another writer hinted — even I find this a little wild — that studying the classic works of English literature was necessary if pupils were to retain "any capacity for humane existence".

These confident pronouncements were a product of a world in which the prestige of classic books was hardly in question. Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens; knowledge of these authors was taken for granted as part of the necessary and inevitable equipment of an educated person. Things are different nowadays. Classic texts will cede ground on the A-level syllabus of the OCR exam board to recent works of bestselling popular non-fiction, such as Tara Westover's memoir *Educated* and Patrick Radden Keefe's *Say Nothing*. These books are making the heady journey from the front tables of Waterstones to the classroom in record time. It is, the OCR protests, just a small change to one part of the curriculum. But it is also a sign of a direction of travel. Our new education secretary, Lucy Powell, is sceptical of Michael Gove's "knowledge based" (and classics rich) curriculum. We should expect more in the same vein.

The notion of a "classic", unfortunately, is against the spirit of the age. To modern sensibilities, the very idea sounds suspiciously anti-democratic. We live in hyper-egalitarian times; to suggest that anything is better than anything else is to reveal oneself as a snob. Everywhere, a radical relativism is in the process of becoming received wisdom. In music journalism, for instance, the "poptimism" movement aims to treat pop songs with the seriousness once reserved for folk or rock. A career as a book reviewer makes you constantly, painfully aware of the ambient hostility to hierarchy and judgment. I was once upbraided by a writer in the Bookseller magazine (of all places) for expressing the "belief that some writing is simply 'better'"; a view that is supposedly "inherently damaging, and marginalising".

According to this way of thinking, the complexity and difficulty of, say, *Paradise Lost* is not a sign of its superiority but of something suspicious. For, unlike the novels of Sarah J Maas, Milton is not "inclusive". Difficult poetry tends by its very nature to exclude — or at least to exclude those readers unwilling to make the effort to understand it. It is not an accident

> Unlike the novels of Sarah J Maas, John Milton is not 'inclusive'

that this cultural populism occurs in a time of political populism. Both tendencies spring from the same impulses. Its wellsprings are resentment (of success, of talent), distrust of expertise (of scientists, of critics) and hostility to complexity (of policy, of artistic expression).

Indeed, cultural populism is at its heart political. Ours is a relentlessly politicised age. All cultural phenomena — celebrity weddings, Shakespeare plays, biscuit rebrands — can be triaged into the twin categories of "virtuous" and "problematic". Books by dead white men rarely emerge well. It is probably also relevant that where reading *David Copperfield* or *The Portrait of a Lady* requires time, concentration and commitment, dismissing those books on political grounds is pretty easy (the OCR syllabus includes a recent book criticising George Orwell's misogyny). Literature complicates our view of the world. Politics simplifies it. Though irritatingly, dismissing *King Lear* on feminist or postcolonial grounds also supplies a pleasant feeling of pseudo-sophistication. How gauche to have merely enjoyed the book.

None of this is encouraging. But I wonder if a new (and less offputtingly bombastic) argument for classics is emerging. In an age that is hostile to difficulty and ambiguity, the strangeness and difficulty of classic books is appealingly countercultural. Someone will always be surprising themselves, Philip Larkin observed, with an urge to be more serious. And in a tediously partisan age, classic books offer a relief from all the zealotry and certainty that surrounds us. An invariable quality of a really great book is an unwillingness to endorse just one point of view. It is the genius of Tolstoy and George Eliot to show us the world from myriad different angles. Keats used the phrase "negative capability" to describe the quality of openness and doubt that he found in Shakespeare. Perhaps one definition of a classic is a book that is incapable of being straightforwardly political.

I would also suggest that classics take human beings and their problems seriously in an age that is unduly awed by the power and glamour of machines. Few in education would dare question the idea that students of computer science should shun artificial intelligence or coding on the grounds of its problematic complexity. And yet an English course that excludes *Hamlet* — one of the most complex and sophisticated arguments about what it is to be human ever produced — is an increasingly uncontroversial prospect. Human beings, the classics insist, are more difficult than any machine and more worthy of serious attention. The case for classics is rooted in humanity.

Those of us who love literature may regret the lost confidence of an age in which the centrality of classic books was taken for granted. But the hubris of that time could also obscure many classic books in a dreary air of obligation. Now, amid a choking fog of trivia, the shining lights of the really great books shine out brighter than ever. Whether they're on the curriculum or not.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor should be sent to letters@thetimes.co.uk or by post to 1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF

Parental paid leave for very ill children

Sir, Dame Rachel de Souza, the children's commissioner, says parents of seriously ill children should receive 12 weeks of paid leave at 90 per cent of normal pay. I have every sympathy with parents whose child is seriously unwell and understand the intolerable pressure this must put upon any family. However, some thought must also be given to how employers, especially small business owners, are supposed to fund this proposed right.

Most small businesses are struggling to stay solvent. The many additional costs attached to running a small business are huge. To suggest that their owners might be able to allow an employee to take extra paid leave is hard. The employee might be one member of only a small workforce; their absence for 12 weeks could have serious implications for income flow. It is clear that small businesses can no longer be governed by the same rules as large companies.

If the government thinks that paying parents is a good idea, perhaps it would like to introduce something similar to the furlough scheme to pay for the absence of an employee? After all, many small businesses did not take advantage of the furlough scheme and continued operating throughout the pandemic. These small businesses cost the country nothing but ever since Covid have had to swallow increasingly large outgoings in respect of higher national insurance contributions, wage rises, fuel costs, rent costs, business rates, insurance premiums and pension contributions.

Jane Evans
Bearsted, Kent

Savvy supermarket

Sir, I've worked for 13 years with Sainsbury's and been called worse in store than a "till monkey" and a "minimum-wage shelf-stacker" ("Stupid cyclists enrage me, and so does this...", Giles Coren, Aug 29), but my "ill-fitting" fleece is never stinky. Most of our colleagues take pride in our appearances and personal hygiene, though our uniforms are mostly unflattering. Moreover, most of us are thoroughly likeable fellows.

Simon Hallwood
London SE13

Sneaking injury

Sir, Phil Ridgway's unit of surprise (letter, May 31) evokes a favourite joke: Where do you take a baby with a peekaboo injury? To the ICU.

Charlie Dyson
London E9

Corrections and clarifications

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Changes to the prisoner early release scheme

Sir, The prime minister deserves credit for pushing the Ministry of Justice into halting the early release of PC Andrew Harper's killers ("Early release blocked for manslaughter prisoners", Aug 31). But more sweeping reforms are needed to solve the overcrowding crisis. If you ask prisoners for their opinions (as I did in conversations after preaching at last Sunday's service in the chapel of HMP Pentonville), their highest priority would be reducing the high level of recalls by the Probation Service. They say it is "crazy" that there are more recall prisoners (for non-criminal breaches of probation rules) than sentenced prisoners in our jails. As an old lag myself I am usually sceptical about old lag grumbles, but reducing the number of probation recalls with different penalties rather than reimprisonment is a suggestion that should appeal to the government.

The Rev Jonathan Aitken
Prison chaplain at HMP Pentonville; London SW5

Sir, Building more cells is a surefire recipe for needlessly increasing the prison population of England and Wales. Rates of imprisonment per 100,000 of European populations range from 356 (Turkey) to 54 (Finland). England and Wales at 145 is the highest among states not formerly part of the Soviet bloc. Germany jails 70 per 100,000 people.

Overcrowding can be tackled by encouraging courts to make more creative use of non-custodial sentences: fines, community service, probation, plus conditional releases on parole. None of these is a "soft" option and there are no magic solutions. But the aim must be to reduce the number of prisoners and apply the financial savings to community options. If Germany can remain socially peaceful with half the number of prisoners as England and Wales, so can we.

Philip Priestley, Wells, Somerset; **Maurice Vanstone**, emeritus professor of law, Swansea University

Sir, Thomas More in his book *Utopia* argued that the execution by hanging of offenders for theft was counterproductive because it placed an offence against property on a par with the taking of life. He suggested that instead the thief should be required to work to repay the loss to the victim, rather than the state. His argument might also apply to incarceration: it puts offences against property on a par with those against the person. Might his approach ease pressure on our prisons, or is that utopian thinking?

Andrew Wallace-Hadrill
Madingley, Cambs

Sir, Without in any way seeking to criticise the substance of the change of direction by Andy Burnham on the early release of those convicted of manslaughter, it does appear to emphasise that the manner of political decision-making is changing. There was a time when it would be by the majority decision of parliament, let alone the collegiate nature of the cabinet. It would now seem to be in the hands of one man and, in this particular case, without any national electoral input.

We are accustomed to the power of the leader of Russia and are no longer surprised by the whims of the present US president — but *here?*

His Honour Barrington Black
London NW3

Letters to The Times must be exclusive and may be edited. Please include a full address and daytime phone number.

Burnham's opt-out

Sir, Further to your report "Burnham will abstain from vote on assisted dying" (Aug 29), in his letter to MPs, the PM wrote: "We all have had different life experiences that will inform how we see this issue." This seems misguided. Surely votes on assisted dying should be driven by philosophical principles and carefully collected clinical and scientific data, not by what are a haphazard collection of individual life experiences. Are MPs to vote on economic or agricultural policy based on life experiences?

Professor Emeritus Stephen Cooper
Belfast

Sir, Your editorial ("New Compère, Same Show", Aug 31) stating that Andy Burnham is evading hard decisions just as Sir Keir Starmer did, could not be more apposite as the PM has said he will abstain from voting on the assisted dying bill. Much has been made about his Catholicism but by not voting against the bill he will be turning down the opportunity to give a much-needed moral lead on this issue.

Colette Saunders
Stotfold, Herts

Capital's necropolis

Sir, In response to Dominic Sandbrook's comment article "Is it time for this great pyramid of London?" (Aug 29), another solution to the lack of burial space in the capital could be a revival of the London Necropolis Railway. From its establishment in 1854 until 1941, this dedicated line ran from Waterloo station to the huge Brookwood Cemetery near Woking, transporting corpses and their grieving loved ones. Three classes were available and on arrival alcoholic solace could be purchased at a café, above which was the sign: "Spirits Served Here."

Paul Larsmon
Burbage, Wilts

Dangerous carnival

Sir, Claims that Notting Hill Carnival is "not dangerous" (letter, Aug 31; Thunderer, Aug 28) are difficult to reconcile with the Metropolitan Police's own figures. Taking in the four carnivals from 2022 to 2025, police recorded 1,364 arrests, 503 assaults and 27 knife crime incidents (source: london.gov.uk). Three people were killed: one by stabbing in 2022 and, in 2024, one by stabbing and another by fatal assault. Police recorded 259 officer injuries over the same four years. There has been improvement. Knife incidents fell from ten in 2023 to six in 2024 and four in 2025, while reported assaults fell to 49 last year. That is welcome. But an event at which three people have been killed and 27 stabbed or slashed in four years plainly presents a significant risk of serious violence.

Garry Crosby
Wistow, Cambs

Shorter but better

Sir, Further to Chris Rhodes's letter (Aug 31) and your report (Aug 28), cricket provides many examples of successful players of no great height, notably Sir Donald Bradman and Ben Duckett, who were both 5ft 7in tall. Harold Larwood was only half an inch taller, and gave Bradman much more trouble than Bill Voce (6ft 1in) or Bill Bowes (6ft 4in).

Christopher Dean
Oakington, Cambs

A TRADE UNION OF BANDITS

FROM THE TIMES SEPTEMBER 1, 1926

The story of a series of exciting adventures in the tracking down of dacoits in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh is unfolded in the report for the year 1925 made by Mr FS Young, Superintendent of Police, to his Inspector-General.

Mr Young, whose monocle and comfortable, well-groomed figure suggest the townsman, even when he is wearing the tunic and khaki shorts of the police officer in camp, has, it is said, more than a bowing acquaintance with the gentlemen of the road, and they are believed to have for him in their turn a great admiration which is tempered by an uneasy feeling that, in the long run, he and his little force, which in the space of three years has not only cultivated a strong *esprit de corps* but has gained the confidence of the people in a remarkable degree, will be too much for them.

The force was created in 1923 for the special purpose of breaking up a particularly dangerous gang of dacoits in Kumoon. It has achieved that object and 113 captured men were eventually tried, after five leaders had been hanged; 108 were given sentences of transportation for life, two received ten years' rigorous imprisonment and only three were acquitted. The figures alone show that this gang of Bhantu criminals presented a problem not surpassed even in Indian criminal history. To ensure that the Bhantus may be given a chance to reform, 50 families have been sent to the Andamans with the men sentenced to transportation and there they are being settled on a separate island. It is hoped that these Bhantus, who have many engaging qualities and are expert agriculturists, when they are not robbers, will become self-supporting and self-respecting inhabitants of their island.

When it had thus achieved its object Mr Young's force was not disbanded because it soon became apparent that the prevalence in the western and central parts of the Provinces of dacoity beyond the power of the ordinary police force to suppress would give ample scope for its further activity.

The organization is described by Mr Young as a trade union of dacoits who "combine when necessary to commit crime and who are always ready to afford every assistance to each other".

THETIMES.COM/ARCHIVE

Back-to-work bleus

Sir, The French attitude to taking the whole of August off ("French dread the back-to-work bleus", Aug 31) is not restricted to those who have to return to work or send children back to school in September. After five years of working in hospitality in France I find it strange that retired people and couples without school-age children still choose to take their holiday within the expensive, crowded and very hot weeks of July and August. Much of the country's tourist infrastructure is only open in the peak season and this compounds the problem. Working towards an extended holiday season would pay dividends for all.

Tony Wilson
Penne d'Agenais, France

Blinded by the light

Sir, The solution to dazzling headlights (letters, Aug 31) is already here in some more expensive cars and just around the corner for the mass market. Called "matrix" technology, these smart systems detect approaching car lights, and selectively dim some of their thousands of tiny LEDs to create a focused shadow around the oncoming car, thus providing a solution. In future there should be no need for the police to gather information on this now avoidable cause of accidents.

Dr Ben Timmis
Emsworth, Hants

Surfacing moles

Sir, Like Dr Andrew Mott (letter, Aug 28) I have come across several fresh mole corpses in our woods. I suspect that earthworms, a source of liquid, have gone deep in these arid conditions and the moles are coming to the surface to find water, which is not available, and then die of thirst. By way of contrast, in very wet conditions moles are sometimes found dead on the surface, having been flushed out of their tunnels by torrential rain.

Dr Hugh McDade
Coleshill, Bucks

Sir, More than 40 years ago I invested in five raised beds for growing vegetables; these not only helped my ailing back but deterred the local moles — until this year when to my dismay they have managed to mountaineer up three feet of the only damp soil in the district to obtain much-needed earthworms. The moles may be thriving but my vegetables are distinctly moribund.

Olivia Holt
Milland, W Sussex

Rabbit food

Sir, James MacManus makes a good point about the impracticality of including minced pork chop in a challenging recipe for rabbit (letter, Aug 29). However, he sidesteps the issue that both bacon and pork chop are required to mask the taste of the rabbit. One wonders if the recipe for this rabbit dish would have been improved immeasurably by the absence of any rabbit.

Stephen Hill
Nottingham

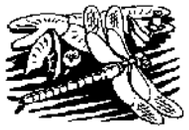
Sir, I know exactly how to mince any meat. I have a Beatrice No2 manual mincer that belonged to my husband's grandmother and must be more than 100 years old. It still works a treat.

Ailsa Bush
Salisbury

Daily Universal Register

UK: Parliament to return after its summer break; football's summer transfer window to close at 11pm.

Nature notes



When young it is an orange button, then a cluster of neat, sunshine-coloured frills, but when fully mature chicken-of-the-woods fungus pales and softens and can look off-puttingly like dog sick. This is something of a shame given that it is only edible when cooked but delicious, with a strong mushroomy flavour and the texture of chicken breast. Easy to identify, and with no lookalikes, it is most commonly found on oak trees but grows on other hardwoods too, including on rustic outdoor furniture and logs. Chicken-of-the-woods generally appears in late summer and autumn and often recurs on the same tree year after year. It should not be foraged when growing on yew because it can absorb some of the yew's toxins. MELISSA HARRISON

Birthdays today

Sir Barry Gibb, *pictured*, singer, Bee Gees, *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), 80; **Matt Brittin**, director-general of the BBC, 58; **Baroness (Sue) Carr of Walton-on-the-Hill**, lady chief justice, 62; **Tsai Chin**, actress, *The Joy Luck Club* (1993), 93; **Clare Connor**, deputy chief executive and managing director, England Women, England and Wales Cricket Board, 50; **Prof Sir Ron Cooke**, vice-president, Royal Geographical Society, 85; **Sir Neil Crompton**, UK ambassador to Ukraine, 62; **Gloria Estefan**, singer-songwriter, *Rhythm is Gonna Get You* (1987), 69; **Sir Jeremy Farrar**, assistant director-general at the World Health Organisation, 65; **Matt Fitzpatrick**, golfer, world ranking No 4, winner of the US Open (2022), 32; **Bruce Foxton**, bassist, the Jam, *News of the World* (1978), 71; **Nicholas Garland**, political cartoonist, 91; **Nusrat Ghani**, Conservative MP for Sussex Weald, deputy speaker, 54; **Ruud Gullit**, footballer, Netherlands (1981-94) and Chelsea (1995-98), and manager, 64; **Bill Hornbuckle**, chief executive and president, MGM Resorts International (hotels and casinos), 69; **Prof Dame Caroline Humphrey (Lady Rees of Ludlow)**, anthropologist, 83; **Allen Jones**, pop artist, 89; **Alasdair McDonnell**, MP for Belfast South (2005-17), leader, Social Democratic and Labour Party (2011-15), 77; **Dave O'Higgins**, jazz saxophonist, 62; **Manuel Piñero**, golfer, 74; **Lara Pulver**, actress, *MobLand* (2025-26), 46; **Carlos Sainz Jr**, Formula 1 racing driver, Williams, 32; **Sir Jim Skea**, chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 73; **Leonard Slatkin**, conductor, 82; **Daniel Sturridge**, footballer, England (2011-17), now sports pundit, 37; **Lily Tomlin**, comedian and actress, *Nine to Five* (1980), 87; **Alice Walpole**, director, Goodenough College, London, UN assistant secretary-general (2017-21), 63; **Olivia Grosvenor**, **Duchess of Westminster**, 34; **Jasmine Whitbread**, chairwoman, Mental Health Matters (charity), 63; **Zendaya**, actress, *The Odyssey* (2026), 30.

On this day

In **1939**, two days before Britain declared war on Germany, a three-day evacuation of 1.5 million children, mothers with infants and the infirm began from cities and towns.

The last word

"And ever has it been that love knows not its own depth until the hour of separation." Kahlil Gibran, writer, *The Prophet* (1923)

Shuffling the Pack

Kemi Badenoch has undertaken a much-needed reshuffle of her shadow cabinet. Now the Conservatives need to show they have the fresh ideas, as well as fresh faces

When Kemi Badenoch became leader of the Conservative opposition in November 2024, her shadow cabinet was constrained by two factors beyond her control. One was the fractured state of the Tory party after its worst-ever election defeat, followed by a divisive leadership contest. The other was the limited pool of MPs to choose from, just 118 strong. Ms Badenoch may have won a strong mandate to be Tory leader from MPs and grassroots members but there was a palpable sense that her top team was not as strong as it could be — or equipped with the talent she needed.

Despite this, Ms Badenoch's fortunes as opposition leader have drastically improved. She discovered an inner steel that has been put to effective use in a series of combative PMQs performances against Sir Keir Starmer. She had great success in holding the former prime minister to account over the Lord Mandelson fiasco, and her pledge to scrap stamp duty last year showed a real determination to help young families. The result is that her approval ratings have displayed a remarkable turnaround, with some recent polls suggesting she is the most popular leader of any political party. Yet, that has not been reflected in the Conservatives' standing, which has remained stuck in the doldrums of the low 20s in survey after survey.

Now, in an attempt to improve her party's fortunes, Ms Badenoch has conducted a major reshuffle. The most notable casualty is Sir Mel Stride, the former work and pensions secretary who served as her shadow chancellor. Although he has been a steady and affable presence, Sir Mel has lacked the brio to take the fight to Labour. In his place comes Andrew Griffith, one of the few MPs with senior leadership experience in a FTSE 100 company. It is now his task to critique the next budget, which could provide a target-rich environment if it yields yet more tax rises.

Ms Badenoch was wise to dispense with Dame Priti Patel as shadow foreign secretary. She remained hamstrung by the legacy of her previous record in government. Tom Tugendhat, who served as security minister, takes her place and brings much needed experience on foreign affairs. Claire Coutinho, who has made headway in the energy brief by recanting for the Tories' misguided support for net zero, will hopefully bring the same passion to her new role as shadow business secretary. She will in turn be replaced by Andrew Bowie, a Scottish MP with a keen interest in North Sea oil and gas.

The reshuffle was, in part, prompted by Sir James Cleverly's decision to run for mayor of London. For the first time in a decade, the Tories have a contender to take seriously, one who can challenge Lord Khan of Tooting's woeful record. The reshuffle is also an acknowledgment that the Tories still need to modernise to have any hope of recovery. Ms Badenoch has duly promoted several rising stars in the party, including Katie Lam to replace Sir James in the shadow housing brief. Other recently elected MPs handed roles include Harriet Cross and Rebecca Paul. The party would do well to champion fresh faces to signal a break with the very mixed record of 14 years in office.

Above all, however, the Conservatives need new ideas. For much of the last 18 months, Reform UK has been the dominant voice on the right of British politics, thanks largely to Nigel Farage's talent for communication. But the Reform UK leader's recent travails over donations have handed the Tories an opportunity for a revival. To do so, the party must offer policies that do not repeat the mistakes of the past. It must focus on its core principles of lower taxes, a smaller state, reduced spending, especially on welfare, and the empowerment of the individual. If Andy Burnham takes Labour to the left, the grand old party of British politics should be there on the centre-right to monopolise the case for common sense.

Fortress Mentality

Britain needs to develop a greater culture of resilience to meet emerging threats

Every so often an event comes along to remind us that the world of convenience we have grown used to is reliant on infrastructure and supply chains that can be all too easily disrupted. The people of Tunbridge Wells in Kent discovered this to their cost last winter when 24,000 households, customers of accident-prone South East Water, were left without water. The people of Brixham in Devon suffered a similar awakening in 2024 when South West Water allowed a parasite to enter the drinking water system. More than 100 people fell ill and 16,000 properties were advised to boil their water. Britons have taken clean drinking water for granted. But, after decades of underinvestment by privatised concerns more interested in payments to shareholders, that is no longer the case.

There is worse, potentially much worse. To the decay of pipes and treatment works — a fifth of drinking water in England and Wales is lost to leaks before it reaches the tap — is added climate change-induced drought and sabotage by an enemy state or terrorists. As this newspaper reports, the latest edition of the national risk register warns that there is as much as a one in four chance of a failure in the drinking water supply and waste water system that could affect one million people. The result could be an exodus of people from the affected area as taps run dry and schools, hospitals, care homes and prisons are hit. One in four is not great odds when the stakes are so high.

Such an outage could be caused by, say, a malicious cyberattack. And that attack could be spurred by the desire of an adversary, most obviously Russia, to sow discontent among a population already deeply disenchanted with its utilities, especially its water industry. But as parched fields and parks across the country remind us, there is a potentially much more serious threat: recurrent drought, especially in southern England.

These dual threats, of a deteriorating international landscape and climate change, require a new focus on national resilience. Utilities were once governed by purely commercial imperatives but increasingly they, together with the manufacturing industry, retail and commerce, find themselves in the front line of a silent cyberwar. Britain with its vast service sector constituting the core of its economy and its physical reliance on imported energy, raw materials, components and finished goods, is the perfect target for so-called grey zone attacks, deniable acts of sabotage short of overt military action. That could include everything from sabotaging a water treatment plant to taking down a power plant, hacking the NHS or cutting critical undersea fibre-optic cables.

As Covid exposed the vulnerability of global supply chains, so the wars in Ukraine and Iran have laid bare the United Kingdom's exposure to energy supply disruption. Yet this country has some of the lowest energy storage capacity in Europe. Complacency still reigns.

Reliant on the outside world as it is, the United Kingdom, a nation of 67 million that imports 40 per cent of its food and 37 per cent of its energy, must create a more resilient society. That means investing in utilities infrastructure commensurate with a bigger population, a diverse energy mix of nuclear, renewables and as much home-produced gas and oil as possible, and armed forces capable of protecting these islands. Britons are lucky enough to inhabit a natural fortress. They and their leaders need a fortress mentality to go with it.

Missing You, Messi

The greatest football player of the modern era is quitting the international stage

When staring down the barrel of 40 even a sporting genius must give way to the unrelenting march of time. So it is with Lionel Messi who has announced his retirement from international football, bringing to a close a top-level career that is comfortably the greatest of the modern era.

Really good players glory in being part of a World Cup side. Messi was a World Cup side. Argentina owed their success in Qatar in 2022 to their impossibly talented captain, who won almost singehandedly. And they survived to make the final in 2026 only because, despite advancing age, he was still in there in sky blue and white to lead.

The boy from Rosario was a statto's dream: eight Ballons d'Or, six European Golden Shoes and eight times Fifa's world's best player. In 207 appearances for Argentina Messi scored 125 goals, making him his country's all-time leading scorer and most capped player. His was a curious sort of footballing super-talent. Small of stature, he looked so ordinary. He wasn't camera-hungry; no preening superstar. But once in charge of the ball he could destroy you. Even as the utility to Portugal of his rival Cristiano Ronaldo faded, Messi remained an indispensable asset to his national side, as he showed in victory against England in July.

In his departing statement, Messi acknowledged the toll taken by those years of dazzling brilliance. "Time is running short, chapters come to a close, and this is one that hurts me deeply. I love, have loved, and will always love being part of the national team. I've given it my all, I have nothing left to give."

His sadness at quitting football's top tier — he is contracted to play for Inter Miami until 2028 — should be tempered by the knowledge that indeed he could not have given more. And that, contrary to his assertion, he does have something still to give: memories of unsurpassed virtuosity.

World

Segregation and deportation:

The hard right is on the brink of taking control of its first German state. **Oliver Moody** reports from Bitterfeld-Wolfen on what it could do next

On Friday, some 3,000 left-wing activists will begin setting up a three-day protest camp at a scrubby park in the east German town of Bitterfeld, vowing to resist a looming "takeover ... [by] right-wing extremists".

That same day, up to 5,000 supporters of the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) party are expected to congregate on the lakeside barely half a mile away, in anticipation of its most significant electoral breakthrough yet: victory in the surrounding state of Saxony-Anhalt.

Police officers are being summoned from across the country to guard against the possibility of riots or brawls between the two sides.

It is not idle paranoia. Less than a fortnight ago, an MEP from the AfD allegedly roughed up a couple of 14-year-old boys with a baseball bat at a rally in the town of Stendal for trying to tear down one of the party's posters.

The spectre of chaos

This is politics with an intensity that Germany has seldom experienced since the rocky aftermath of reunification in 1990. At Saxony-Anhalt's election on September 6, the AfD is poised to win by such a large margin that it could quite conceivably obtain an absolute majority in the regional parliament.

It would be the first time since 1945 that a party of the radical right has controlled a German state. The AfD would find itself in charge of the police, the state intelligence service, the asylum system, the schools, and the funding for culture, civil society and the area's public broadcaster.

Increasingly apocalyptic warnings are circulating: street violence, citizens' militias, the mass deportation of naturalised German passport-holders, a localised recession.

During a televised debate last Wednesday, Sven Schulze, the state's chief minister from the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), accused Ulrich Siegmund, his AfD rival, of de facto proposing to drag women out of the workplace and back "to the cooker". Der Spiegel designated Siegmund "the most dangerous man in Germany" on its front cover.

For its part, the AfD thunders about an imminent "dictatorship of the old parties" that it says will soon crush the last remnants of German democracy if it is left unchecked. "This is," its manifesto warns, "our final chance."

The party has always been frank about its belief that the path to national power runs through the *Bundesländer*, the 16 federal states.

In this vision, Saxony-Anhalt would be the first of these polities to serve as the template for a new Germany.

A foretaste of power

Those who are curious about what that might look like in practice could do worse than examine Bitterfeld-Wolfen, one of the few sizeable districts in which the AfD already wields a substantial measure of real political power.

A little like a smaller version of Stoke-on-Trent, the industrial town of 36,000 people is a diffuse sprawl consisting of five smaller settlements mashed together into a single administrative unit.

It has an unenviable reputation. If there is one thing most other Germans know about Bitterfeld, it is that the town was once known as the dirtiest in Europe because of its highly polluting chemicals sector, the birthplace of PVC plastic and colour film.

If there is a second thing, it is that this was one of the earliest bastions of the AfD, which first became the strongest party locally in 2016.

At the Bundestag election last year, 41 per cent of the town voted AfD. Kay-Uwe Ziegler, who sits on the town council for the party and also represents the neighbouring Mansfeld constituency in the Bundestag, said: "It's just a head start in terms of experience that the people here in the east have.

"They are quicker to see things that they don't want ... They don't have the same imprint as a lot of people who were socialised in the West, who are just very, very obedient to the government and believe a lot of things that are spread in the public media."

Today, Bitterfeld-Wolfen's mayor, Armin Schenk, is still technically a politician from the CDU. His position is so enfeebled, however, that most of the town councillors talk about him as though he were not really there.

The true centre of political gravity is the AfD, which holds 15 of the 40 seats on the council and increasingly swings majorities with support from Pro-Bitterfeld-Wolfen, a local microparty.

A recent joint manoeuvre by the two parties has drawn national attention. First they hacked back administrative funding for a youth club and NGO that co-ordinated various "democracy promotion" projects around the town, in effect forcing it out of the role.

Then they transferred responsibility for the programme to a friendly urban development organisation with no previous experience of running political education projects but plenty of ties to their politicians and business contacts.

Critics characterise this as a grab for power over the machinery of civil society. The AfD, however, simply sees it as levelling the playing field against a biased system of liberal indoctrination.

An internal party policy paper, leaked to the left-wing Taz newspaper, describes the move as a blueprint for other AfD associations to start "draining the swamp" of state-funded and "politically one-sided" civic projects.

Aljoscha Begrich, a curator and theatre dramaturg who runs the local biennial Osten (East) art and discussion festival, said this was a foretaste of what might ultimately unfold on a much larger scale.

"Everything that happens in Saxony-Anhalt — and I don't just mean the AfD, but the behaviour of all the parties, of society, the media, culture and the arts — it's like a blueprint for what is happening at a national level," he said.

"The first insight for me has been that the AfD doesn't even have to be in power to determine the discourse. The pressure it exerts is so strong that it forms a particular mindset in others."

Ulrich Siegmund is the main AfD candidate in the Saxony-Anhalt election. Sven Schulze of the CDU, left, accuses him of

Battle for the soul of the state

The fundamental conflict at the heart of the election in Saxony-Anhalt is a contest between two mutually irreconcilable notions of democracy.

The parties of the German centre, and with them much of the country's broader establishment, fret that history is in danger of rhyming with the death of the Weimar Republic as another charismatic but virulently anti-democratic movement elbows its way into power. The AfD, on the other hand, maintains that people have blinded themselves to the true threat, which is that "decades of misguided developments are transforming what was once a democratic state into a totalitarian state from the inside out".

It accuses its rivals of despotically harnessing the apparatus of the state — funding streams, public broadcasters, even spy agencies — to an effort to destroy a democratically legitimate opponent. Its 258-page state election manifesto, which contains roughly as many words as *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, is a detailed and radical programme for what is either a kind of majoritarian revolution or a wholesale restoration of traditional values, depending on your perspective.

It aspires to establish a state in which ethnic Germans can finally put themselves first and rediscover their old self-confidence as one of the world's pre-eminent civilisations, from celebrating the realpolitik of Bismarck to holding school lessons about the mystical wonder of the forests.

The ordinary people of Saxony-Anhalt, it says, are fed up to the back teeth with being "indoctrinated" and patronised from the classroom to the 7pm television news show each evening.

If the AfD wins power, the licence fee will be abolished. The state domestic intelligence agency will be banned from publishing annual reports on political threats to the constitutional order.

'Prussian values'

Schools will be restricted to imparting basic "cultural technologies" such as

Spain points finger at Israel and Russia for Ceuta crisis
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Hegseth's wife marshals 'White House run'
Page 26

how the AfD might govern

CRAIG STENNETT, JENS SCHLUTER/GETTY IMAGES; HEIKO REBSCH/DPA/AP

wanting to force women "back to the cooker". Above left, an anti-AfD protest

reading, writing and arithmetic, instead of providing social, psychological and integration support.

Students with disabilities will be segregated into separate institutions. The proportion of secondary school pupils on the *Gymnasium* track for academic studies at university will be capped at 25 per cent. Compulsory school attendance will be scrapped and those children who do go anyway will be taught "patriotism and national pride", with history lessons that convey the "inspiration and model" of the Kaisers' Germany and the subsequent Weimar Republic from 1871 to 1933.

When youths fail to soak up traditional Prussian virtues, judges will be empowered to put them in prison for up to four weeks for even the most trivial criminal offences as a "disciplinary measure".

The local police and public order offices will be bolstered by *Bürgerwacht* (citizen's watch) units of volunteers, with undefined powers to enforce the law. Any doubts about which groups this policy is meant to target were dispelled this week by Siegmund, the AfD lead candidate, when he said in a televised debate that it "would not have been necessary before 2015", meaning the influx of non-Europeans at the height of the migration crisis.

An AfD state government will seek to have Germany's economic sanctions against Moscow lifted and to resume full economic relations with Russia, including fossil energy imports.

Furthermore, there will be a "remigration offensive" to send Ukrainian war refugees back to their home country. "Culturally alien" skilled workers will no longer be welcome in Saxony-Anhalt. There will be a push to obliterate the fundamental right to asylum.

Polls indicate that the overwhelming majority of Germans, and indeed a large share of AfD supporters, balk at some of these policies.

The real question is how seriously this stuff is meant to be taken. The AfD's critics tend to read it as a calculated understatement, the top end of a slippery slope that might ultimately lead back down to the moral depths of Dachau and Buchenwald.

Surveys, however, suggest less than half of voters expect the party to follow through on its more contentious proposals. Perhaps, the reasoning goes, these are simply the sort of things populist politicians feel obliged to say.

Revolution or pragmatism?

Bitterfeld-Wolfen offers some clues to where the balance lies between pragmatism and revolutionary fervour.

The town is periodically held up in the German press as a harbinger of what the country can expect should the AfD come to power: a de facto one-party state where rival forces have been browbeaten into a cowed silence.

There are a few elements of truth in this depiction. Begrich says the AfD has subjected his Osten democracy festival to "tactics of attrition" so relentless that even the CDU and other mainstream parties are now reluctant to let it use municipal spaces in Bitterfeld.

Ziegler, on the other hand, does not appear to have paid much attention to his own party's state election manifesto, let alone to have nurtured a grand vision for remaking German society.

A trained veterinary engineer, he says he was originally motivated to go into politics because out-of-town shopping centres were bleeding custom from his textile business in the middle of town. "For me, ideology is still a negative thing," he said. "If someone is ideologically diehard then I basically can't discuss anything with them, because they don't go into the matter in an open-ended way."

Even some of the AfD's opponents in Bitterfeld-Wolfen say they have developed a kind of grudging respect for its matter-of-fact realpolitik.

Torsten Weiser, a local Social Democratic Party politician and treasurer of Connect People, an NGO that tries to interest young people in politics, is no friend of the AfD. Yet he says the bleak depictions of its grip on the town are wide of the mark. "It's a mixed bag," he said. "Of course, especially in an election campaign, things tend to get ideological and people try to push narratives ... But I have to say, overall it is pretty pragmatic and a question of very practical matters, such as a fire station or the repair work that needs to be done on a road."

Even in the shadow of the AfD, Weiser says, conventional politics and civic life tick over. Bitterfeld-Wolfen is nothing like the dystopia it is made out to be.

"Ultimately, it doesn't help us when the town is portrayed as the 'blue realm' [the AfD's party colour] and everything in it as terrible and awful," he said. "That's just not the case. Life goes on here, and we try to make the best of it."

Plan to demolish East German 'fun palace' stirs unhappiness

Oliver Moody

Erich Honecker, the dictatorial leader of the communist German Democratic Republic (GDR), was not a man known as a paragon of *joie de vivre*.

On March 14, 1980, though, he bestirred himself to deliver a paean to what he hailed, in soaring oratory, as "an exemplary centre for meaningful leisure-time configuration, recreation and sporting activity".

This sprawling new complex in East Berlin was the GDR's premier "fun palace", known as the Sport and Recreation Centre (SEZ).

At the time, it was thought to be the largest facility of its kind anywhere. It opened in 1981 and had seven swimming pools, an artificial waterfall, saunas, sunbeds for tanning and even a wave pool, which was considered the height of socialist jollification in its day. It also had a martial arts dojo, a 16-lane bowling alley, an ice rink, state-sanctioned skateboards and a hair salon.

For many East Berliners whose most exotic holiday prospect might be a once-in-a-lifetime trip to the seaside in Latvia or Romania, it was a chance to escape the greyness of daily routine.

The fate of the SEZ, which has lapsed into ruination since it was shut down at the turn of the millennium, has become a political battleground before Berlin's state election in mid-September.

The city-state's government, having bought the dilapidated property from a private investor for a symbolic sum of €1 in 2022, planned to have it torn down and replaced with 680 flats, a school and a modern sports hall.

The bulldozers were on the brink of swinging into action when an eleventh hour court order halted the project in February, ostensibly to protect nesting pairs of house sparrows, redstarts and bats during their breeding season.

A campaign to preserve the SEZ is gathering momentum. Both the radical Left Party and the Greens, which may together form the backbone of the next government, want at least part of the complex to be spared. More than 19,000 people have signed a petition calling for the whole thing to be renovated and reopened.

An exhibition that opened at the Bauhaus Reuse centre in Berlin at the weekend seeks to rally public sympathy for the endeavour by charting the megaproject's remarkable history.

The original idea, according to the architect Ludwig Heimbach, one of the show's curators, was to stem the flow of people fleeing the GDR by bringing "something of the West to the East".

This was part of Honecker's "consumer socialism" agenda, an ill-fated effort to soothe public unease by borrowing vast sums to provide the illusion of rising living standards.

The SEZ drew up to 10,000 visitors a day and has on the whole been fondly remembered. Ultimately, however, it turned out to be something of a white elephant, depending heavily on state subsidies. After reunification in 1990 those financial apron strings were cut.

Kay Fingerle, an architect and photographer who assembled the exhibition with Heimbach, said: "It was no longer an economically viable concern."

There were efforts to revive the complex, including an art and music festival and various partial reopenings, but none of them quite took off.

The battle over the destiny of the SEZ comes at a point where the cost and availability of housing are becoming the single decisive subject in Berlin's state election. It is also tinged with a note of *Ostalgie*, or nostalgia, for the aesthetics and culture of the GDR.

However, Heimbach and Fingerle have little truck with the sepia-tinted half-recollections of life under a totalitarian regime. For them, the SEZ must stand or fall purely on its own architectural and functional merits now.

"We both have a very, very hard time with *Ostalgie*," said Heimbach. "We stated pretty clearly the conditions in which this building was built and what kind of dictatorship it was. We absolutely don't want that back in any way."

ULLSTEIN BILD/GETTY IMAGES

The Sport and Recreation Centre, which and had seven swimming pools among other attractions, was part of East Germany's ill-fated plan for "consumer socialism"

MARK A FERNLEY/TWO POINT O MEDIA

Heavy load passing **Mark Fernley took this picture at a waterhole in Senyati, Botswana, from a concrete hide over which some of the elephants walked unawares**

Spain points finger at Israel and Russia over Ceuta crisis

Spain
David Sharrock Madrid

Pedro Sánchez, the Spanish prime minister, has ruled out involvement by Morocco in the mass influx of migrants into Ceuta, saying that Spanish intelligence found no evidence implicating the country.

Sánchez said Morocco had offered immediate co-operation when the crisis erupted. "There is no information from any intelligence centre that casts doubt on the involvement of the Moroccan authorities," he added. He described co-operation with Rabat as "frankly positive" and said Morocco had offered "instant co-operation" after some 80,000 mostly young and male Moroccans crossed into the Spanish autonomous city on July 30.

The interview was the first public appearance by Sánchez since the crisis began, breaking a silence of a month in which he has faced mounting criticism over his government's handling of the influx and his decision to remain on holiday. He chose Cadena SER, a radio network regarded as sympathetic to his socialist government, to make his first detailed account of the crisis.

Having rejected Moroccan responsibility, Sánchez instead pointed to criminal networks and disinformation. He said false claims circulating on social media about a Spanish supreme court ruling on the return of migrants who entered by sea helped fuel the influx.

The disinformation, he said, had spread through networks "associated both with Russia and Israel, as well as an international far right that always uses migration, not only to attack Spain but also Europe". He added that this did not necessarily mean the crisis had been orchestrated by a state entity.

Israel's foreign minister, Gideon Sa'ar, said in a post on X that Sánchez was "lying shamelessly".

Sánchez contradicted his defence minister, Margarita Robles, by denying that the intelligence services had warned the government in advance of the incursion. The national intelligence centre (CNI) had shared situation reports before the crossings, he said, but none had predicted anything approaching the eventual scale. "Nobody predicted that we were going to have an avalanche of such characteristics."

He denied a contradiction between the accounts given by Fernando Grande-Marlaska, the interior minister, and Robles over what the intelligence services had told the government. Marlaska has previously insisted that the government received no warnings, while Robles defended the CNI's work.

It was also reported that the intelligence services had linked the mass arrival of migrants to Gibraltar's decision to align with Schengen area rules, according to a column in El País newspaper, although it did not give details.

Sánchez defended his decision to take a lengthy summer holiday in a state-owned palace in Lanzarote while the crisis unfolded. "I have worked and I have rested. It is my right," he said. "I know that for an important part of the population I shouldn't have the right to have holidays or to be president."

He said King Felipe would visit Ceuta, a gesture towards a territory that has been demanding greater attention from Madrid since the influx. It is common practice for the King and Queen to visit crisis-hit zones immediately.

Sánchez said about 70,000 people had entered Ceuta during the crisis and that nine out of ten had since returned to Morocco, leaving about 5,000 in the city, including 1,200 minors. Ceutans put the figures higher, saying at least 80,000 people entered on July 30 and about 8,000 remain today.

Sánchez is due to face parliament on Thursday over the government's handling of the extraordinary breach of Spain's border.

Niger parades rebels behind coup Moscow helped crush

Niger
Jane Flanagan Africa Correspondent

Captured soldiers were paraded on state television in Niger after Russia's Africa Corps helped crush a mutiny that threatened the west African nation's military junta.

Viktor Voropaev, the Russian ambassador to Niger, told Russian media that the mutineers behind the weekend's revolt were "neutralised particularly thanks to the intervention" of the Kremlin-backed force, which provided ground and aerial support to loyalist troops after the Niger regime called for back-up.

Russian boots have been on the ground in Niger since 2024, ostensibly to help the junta fight a jihadist insurgency spreading across the Sahel. But the thwarted putsch has added weight to claims that the Kremlin-controlled fighters' priority is to prop up a fragile leadership that itself came to power by force.

Soldiers and machinegun-mounted vehicles ringed the airport and presidential compound yesterday, two days after both had come under hours of gunfire and explosions from mutinous troops, angry at mounting casualties in the fight against jihadists linked to Islamic State and al-Qaeda.

General Abdourahamane Tiani, who seized power in a coup in 2023 then ejected French troops and turned to Moscow, has yet to comment publicly on the revolt. No Nigerien official has acknowledged the Russian role.

The rebels held off loyalist forces for hours before Africa Corps fighters were deployed, according to Voropaev and analysts.

The Kremlin-controlled force emerged from the Wagner Group, the private militia, after Yevgeny Prigozhin, its leader, was killed in 2023.

Trump threatens Iran after exchange of fire

United States President Trump threatened to hit Iran "hard" after the two foes traded fire for the first time in more than a month, while Iran's president said more fighting was not in his country's interest.

After six months of war the two sides remain at an impasse. Iran is keeping the Strait of Hormuz closed and the US is persisting with a counter-blockade. Late on Sunday the US said it had conducted strikes on an Iranian island in the strait. Tehran retaliated by attacking US military targets. The exchange raised fears of a return to significant hostilities.

"We're going to hit them hard," Trump said, according to a Fox News reporter who spoke to him. "There will be a response."

The US said it had attacked Iranian rocket launchers on the island of Larak to prevent Tehran planting mines in the shipping lane. Iran responded with missile and drone attacks aimed at Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, saying it was targeting US forces there.

President Pezeshkian of Iran later called for dialogue. "We continue to strive for a path of agreement and understanding, and we believe that continuing the war is neither in our interest, nor in the interest of the region," he said.

State media reported that two people were killed in the US attack on Larak and several others wounded.

Met halts Galliano show

United States The British fashion designer John Galliano withdrew from his upcoming retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York, amid scrutiny over his antisemitic remarks. Galliano, 65, said he made the decision after "much reflection and great sadness". In 2011 he was filmed making antisemitic tirades in a Paris café.

Ferry captain in court

Cyprus The captain and crew of a ferry that capsized off the northern coast of the island appeared in court on charges of causing death by negligence. At least eight people were killed and 18 are missing after the ferry carrying 259 passengers rolled over in rough waters on Sunday. Allegations include that some doors were locked.

Caesarean mother burnt

Czech Republic A mother was burnt during a caesarean section. The woman aged 24 had burns to her genitals, legs and belly, the Denik N newspaper reported. Her baby was not hurt, the Bulovka Hospital in Prague said. Denik N said the mother, who is stable, caught fire when staff used a disinfectant then a surgical instrument to stop her bleeding.

Tramp hands out cash

Italy A homeless man who gave away €50 notes to passers-by was questioned by police. The man, an Iraqi known as Haider, lives in a tent in Belluno, northern Italy. After police were alerted they found a briefcase containing €4,390. Haider is yet to explain where he obtained the money, the council said. The town hall is to decide what to do with it.

‘Moonies’ leader jailed for trying to influence president and wife

South Korea
Jan Camenzind Broomby

The leader of the influential South Korean Unification Church has been sentenced to a combined two years in prison for attempting to influence South Korea’s former president and bribing the former first lady.

Known as the “True Mother”, Han Hak-ja, 83, was sentenced to one year in prison for giving a luxury necklace and a designer bag to Kim Keon-hee, then the first lady, before asking for favours via an intermediary.

An extra one-year sentence was handed down for paying 100 million Korean won (£54,000) in 2022 to a former ruling party legislator in the hopes of influencing Yoon Suk-yeol before his inauguration as president.

Han rose to prominence as the co-founder of the Unification Church, whose members are referred to informally as “Moonies”, alongside her late husband, Sun Myung-moon.

Together, the couple are known by followers as the “True Parents” and are believed to represent God on earth. The church leaders have officiated mass weddings with thousands of their followers at a time and are described by some as having led a cult, a claim the church denies.

Seoul’s district court said Han used the church’s immense wealth and the 2022 presidential election “as an opportunity to expand its influence and committed crimes with the purpose of expanding political influence”.

Han denies wrongdoing and has previously said she has no interest in South Korean politics, instead blaming church employees for acting behind her back. Her lawyers say they will appeal against the decision.

The Unification Church rejected the ruling. “We find it impossible to accept the court’s judgment that President Han Hak-ja directed the acts in question or recognised and approved their illegal purpose,” the church said. It had previously described Han’s arrest as a “blatant attack on religious freedom”.

Both Kim and Yoon have themselves also received prison sentences: Kim for accepting gifts from the Unification Church, and Yoon for his botched imposition of martial law in December 2024.

Chorus of anger at punks’ Le Pen slur

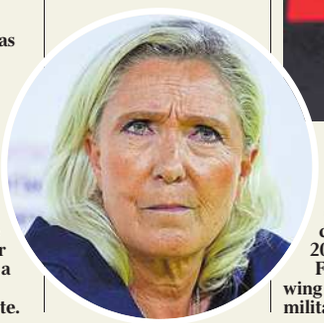
STEPHANIE LECOCQ/REUTERS; KRISTY SPARROW/GETTY IMAGES

At a festival in Paris the Lambrini Girls, from Brighton, made clear their feelings for Marine Le Pen, left, leader of the National Rally

A British punk duo has stirred anger on the French political right by performing at a Paris festival in front of a crude insult to Marine Le Pen, leader of the anti-immigration National Rally (Charles Bremner writes).

On Saturday, Phoebe Lunny and Lilly Macieira, self-styled provocateurs known as the Lambrini Girls, appeared on the main stage at the Rock en Seine festival with a projected backdrop of large red capital letters reading “F* Marine Le Pen”.**

As video of the act circulated on social media, the episode was amplified when Matthieu Pigasse, a left-wing billionaire whose company owns the festival, posted the image on Instagram. The event, which this year attracted 175,000 people to the Saint Cloud park over five days, also posted a picture of the performance on its site.



Le Pen’s party reacted with contempt. “Leftists have nothing to offer but insults and hatred,” it said. “In 2027, the French people will bring Marine Le Pen to power. Their rage won’t change a thing.”

Matthieu Valet, a Rally MEP, said: “This leftist British punk band insults Marine Le Pen ... It’s so pitiful. They are really low-level. They claim to fight sexism while displaying ‘F Marine Le Pen’ on stage ... absolute wackos”.

Le Pen supporters urged the state to end culture ministry subsidies to the rock festival, which has taken a militant left-wing turn since coming under the control of Pigasse in 2017.

Frontières, a right-wing news site, said the militant “queer” Brighton-based singers had achieved a paradox by “hurling a sexual insult at one of the rare female candidates in the presidential election”.

Le Pen is polling far ahead of a crowded field in the race for the election of a successor to President Macron next April.

Pigasse claims to be leading a “cultural battle against the far right” and backs the hard-left Jean-Luc Mélenchon, in second place.

The insult to Le Pen garnered admiration on left-wing social media, with some saying no French act would dare make such a gesture.

“You can’t help but back them,” said MHF Blog, a popular account. “English women fighting the far right through their politically charged punk music. Great performance.”

Back judge not Trump, Japan PM told

Japan
Richard Lloyd Parry Tokyo

For decades, Japan’s place in the world has been defined by two principles: strict insistence on the rule of international law, and a close alliance with its military protector, the United States. Now the prime minister, Sanae Takaichi, is in the uncomfortable position of having to choose between the two.

Takaichi’s government is facing indignant criticism, even from its own supporters, for choosing loyalty to the US government over support for a Japanese citizen personally targeted by American policy. The case encapsulates the dilemma faced by other international leaders, from Canada’s Mark Carney to Italy’s Giorgia Meloni: at what point do you tell President Trump that he has gone too far?

At the centre of the row is Tomoko Akane, a distinguished 70-year old Japanese judge, who is president of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. The ICC, to which Japan is the biggest donor, has enraged the US by, among other moves, issuing an arrest warrant for the Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu.

This month it issued the latest round of sanctions against officials of the court: Abdoulaye Seye, a Senegalese lawyer who is leading the investigation of Netanyahu, and Akane. The sanctions bar them from visiting the US and freeze any American assets. They also have the effect of making it impossible to use credit cards such as Visa or conducting transactions via US banks.

“I had anticipated these various unreasonable inconveniences or threats to me personally from the beginning, and they will not change how I approach my legal work, nor will they crush me,” Akane told journalists last week. “Japan has always made the rule of law a cornerstone of its foreign relations, and for that reason I believe that expectations of Japan, and the expectations of the world, are high.”

But the response of Takaichi and her ministers has been muted, to put it kindly. Her first reaction to the sanctions against Akane was to describe them as “very unfortunate”. Pressed on the matter a few days later, she said: “This measure is incompatible with Japan’s position, and we take it extremely seriously.”

She added: “As a matter of protecting Japanese nationals overseas, we have a responsibility to protect President Akane. As the largest financial contributor to the ICC, we also have to protect this important institution.”

Tomoko Akane has been denied access to US credit cards and US banks

What was lacking was any direct reproach of the US, or its policy, as expressed by the secretary of state, Marco Rubio, of “using all the tools at our government’s disposal, working beside every ally with whom we can make common cause [to] dismantle the ICC — brick by brick, if necessary”.

The mildness of this response, and the failure to fight for a distinguished citizen whose leadership of the ICC had been regarded as a mark of prestige for Japan, has annoyed even people who instinctively support Takaichi and her right-wing nationalist Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

“In the face of US pressure, Takaichi seems unable to demonstrate even the resolve to protect a Japanese citizen’s right to continue performing her duties, let alone uphold the rule of law,” the conservative Yomiuri newspaper wrote in a leader.

In Japan’s Diet, the nonpartisan parliamentary association for reconsidering human rights diplomacy, which is chaired by a former LDP defence minister, complained that the response was “far weaker” than those of other governments. “There were no words reaffirming to the world the importance of the ICC as it comes under attack, nor were there words showing a determination to protect the president of the court sent there by Japan,” it said.

“‘Very unfortunate’ is an expression of sentiment, not of intent. What is required now is Japan’s intent.”

But if the choice is between disappointing a Japanese judge and risking the ire of Trump, then there is little doubt which path Takaichi will take. There is no chance that she will follow the example of Giorgia Meloni, who indignantly defended Pope Leo against Trump’s claim that he was “WEAK on Crime, and terrible for Foreign Policy”.

In both terms in office, flattering Trump has been one of Japan’s highest foreign policy goals, and Takaichi has achieved it as well as anyone. At their first meeting last year on a US aircraft carrier in Japan, she reacted to Trump’s speech by grinning, raising her thumbs, and jumping up and down while simultaneously pumping her arm into the air.

“This woman is a winner,” the delighted president remarked. “We’ve become very close friends all of a sudden.”

World

Two dead, 15 missing in Grand Canyon flood

Sam Rucker New York

Two people have died and about 15 are missing after a flash flood swept through the Grand Canyon.

Heavy rain began falling on Saturday, overwhelming Bright Angel Creek, a remote part of the canyon with a river flowing through it. Scores of people were forced to flee when torrents of water wiped out footbridges and swept large boulders and metal structures through the creek and into the Colorado River.

The body of a man, 46, was recovered along the river, park officials said on Sunday night. Yesterday, they said a second body had been found.

The National Park Service is asking for more information from anyone who may have been hiking along the creek, as well as from visitors staying at nearby camping grounds.

More than four million people a year visit the Unesco world heritage in Arizona. Many of them stay in the Phantom Ranch lodge by Bright Angel Creek, which is only accessible by hiking, raft or mule transport.

By Sunday morning more than 60 people had been evacuated from Phantom Ranch and the lower North Kaibab Trail. By the evening, the National Park Service had confirmed dozens of people were unaccounted for, adding that it was working with the authorities in Arizona in the search and rescue operation.

Nikki Baggs, a 41-year-old who was among those airlifted out of the bottom of the Grand Canyon, told the BBC: "The whole thing was terrifying. It was a beautiful day and then people were screaming, running."

Erica Viola said she was at Bright Angel Campground when the rain started, and she and about 50 other hikers watched the creek rise and then debris start to flow by, including what looked like a cabin. The group was taken by helicopter to safety, ending her trip two days early, she said.

"The flash flood resulted in significant impacts to infrastructure throughout Bright Angel Creek," the National Park Service said in a statement. "Grand Canyon National Park staff are continuing to assess damage to trails, bridges, utilities, facilities and other infrastructure."

Up to an inch of rain fell within about 30 minutes on Saturday.

MOUNEB TAIM/ANADOLU/GETTY IMAGES

Red letter day People from around the world gathered in Tilburg in the Netherlands for the annual Redhead Days festival

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War secretary's wife marshals '2028 run'

United States
Susie Coen, David Charter

When Pete Hegseth's wife, Jennifer, accompanied him to meet Republican senators before his fraught confirmation hearings to become secretary of defence, he admitted it was "unusual". It may have bewildered politicians expecting a tête-à-tête with the budding cabinet member, but Hegseth said having her by his side "felt so right and so natural".

"We've always been ride or die," he said last year during a podcast appearance, while his wife sat next to him on a small blue sofa. "It's always been 'we're doing this together', and so when we did that first, I was like, 'Oh, this is the way it's going to be the whole time'," Hegseth added.

His wife's presence has been felt at the Pentagon from the moment he was sworn in. Pictures of the couple adorn the corridors. She has interviewed candidates for positions at the rebranded Department of War, worked out with marines in camouflage shorts with her husband, and was included in a Signal group chat in which Hegseth shared plans for US strikes on the Houthis in Yemen.

Now Hegseth, 46, is understood to be sounding out a potential run for the presidency in 2028 — with his wife's help. The pair have weighed the idea with aides in recent months, according to NBC News. They believe Hegseth, who has got involved in the culture war issues that rile the Maga base, has some of the same qualities that bolster Trump's appeal. Hegseth has said reports that he is plotting a campaign are "100 per cent false".

Trump, 80, has avoided anointing his heir apparent, at times pitting JD Vance, the vice-president, and Marco Rubio, his secretary of state, against one another. Only a handful of former secretaries of defence have won the presidency. But there has also been no cabinet secretary spouse quite like Mrs Hegseth, 49, who addressed reporters from the Oval Office this month after her appointment to lead the president's Military Spouse Commission. She met Hegseth at Fox News while working as his producer. Since the couple moved to Washington from a farm near Nashville, she has hosted a Pentagon garden party for military mothers, read books to children and hosted families for Christmas tea. She also homeschools their seven children, six of them from previous relationships.

KEVIN DIETSCH/GETTY IMAGES

Jennifer Hegseth came with her husband when he met Republican senators in January last year

In Trumpworld, there is nervousness at Jennifer Hegseth's influence and her role at the Department of War, an official told The Times. "Jennifer Hegseth is a very heavy hand and one of his closest advisers with access inside the building, which is very unusual for a secretary of war/secretary of defence," the official said.

Hegseth was not seen as being able to compete for the 2028 nomination with rivals Vance and Rubio, the official said. "There have been rumblings about his potential presidential ambitions ... It would be in his best interest to stay quieter than to be out there aggressively," they said.

The official added: "It is the syndrome of, you're a cabinet member, you're young, everybody thought you weren't going to get in this position, everybody thought you weren't going to last as long as you did. So what the hell is a run at the presidency?"

As secretary of war, Hegseth has dismantled diversity policies, banning transgender people from the US military and suggesting women should not serve in combat roles.

His position as a culture-war warrior could help him appeal to a swathe of the Republican base, said Christopher Galdieri, a political science professor at Saint Anselm College. "There will be a segment of the electorate who wants the next Trump and they will want the most Maga candidate they can get, so I could see that potentially breaking in his favour."

But frustrations over the Iran war, and potential concerns about Hegseth's personal life, such as allegations of alcoholism and sexual assault, could prove difficult for him, Galdieri said. Hegseth denies wrongdoing.

The official said the most astute would to bide his time. "My thought would be ... to throw his hat in the ring in the future after maybe a little bit of a clean-up on the image."

Business

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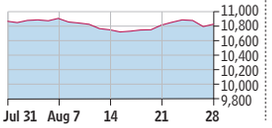

Dow Jones
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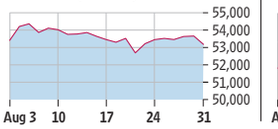

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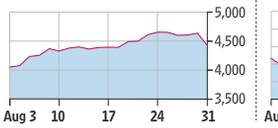

Brent crude (6pm)
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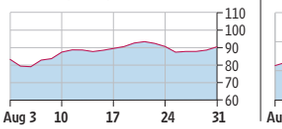

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£/€
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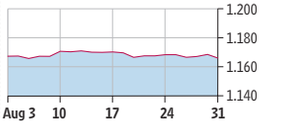


MoD pushes Navantia for faster delivery of Royal Navy supply ships

Robert Lea Industrial Editor

The Spanish shipbuilder charged with constructing the crucial supply ships for the UK's aircraft carriers and naval strike force has been told to speed up delivery of the vessels to get the Royal Navy ready for conflict.

Navantia, the Cadiz-based company that took over Harland & Wolff and its Belfast and Appledore shipyards — and in so doing the Ministry of Defence's £2 billion contract to build three 216-metre vessels supplying munitions, stores and supplies to the Royal Navy front line — will lay the keel for the first ship tomorrow.

The symbolic formal start of construction at the Appledore yard in Devon comes 11 years after David Cameron's government recognised the need for the new vessels in the 2015 strategic defence review. Under the much-delayed schedule, in which final integration will take place at the historic Belfast yard, the first vessel is due to go to sea from 2030 and the last two will be complete by 2032.

But after comments by Sir Keir Starmer this year that Britain needed to move to a "war footing" and "fighting readiness" in the face of foreign aggression, not least Russian incursions into British waters, it has emerged that Navantia has come under pressure from the Ministry of Defence to build faster.

"We have a target date," said Donato Martínez, chief executive of Navantia's UK arm. "But the Ministry of Defence is pursuing a quicker delivery date. The customer [the MoD] is pushing. It makes it more challenging but we are trying."

Navantia is up against it as it tries to rebuild the Harland & Wolff business it acquired from the administrators in early 2025. Not least because Appledore, a specialist in smaller naval vessels, has not built a ship in six years — the last being the George Bernard Shaw for the Irish navy — while Belfast, having become a repair and refit yard, has not built a ship since 2003.

While Appledore is close to full commission with more than 200 workers, Belfast, with a workforce of 500, needs a further 1,000 employees to be final assembly-ready.

The contract for the three vessels, formally known as fleet solid support

Continued on page 28

Watchdog to keep focus on growth

Reynolds rejects calls for tougher tech oversight

Emma Powell Media and Telecoms Editor

The government's push for the UK's competition watchdog to prioritise economic growth over regulatory interference will remain in place under Andy Burnham, the business secretary has confirmed, despite calls for tougher oversight of the world's largest technology companies to protect British businesses and consumers.

Jonathan Reynolds said there were no plans to revise the "strategic steer" that was given to regulators under Sir Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves, which saw Marcus Bokkerink ousted as chairman of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) at the start of last year and replaced by Doug Gurr, a former Amazon executive.

"The changes we made just after the [2024] election, in terms of the strategic steer ... and in terms of key personnel at the CMA, they get the balance right in terms of making sure we've got that competitive dynamic economy and also making sure that we have a pro-business environment, a growth environment," Reynolds told The Times. The changes should "be allowed to bed in", he said.

Reynolds was business secretary when the "strategic steer" was issued and has returned to the post after a brief stint as chief whip.

However, critics have claimed that the growth agenda has resulted in the CMA being too soft in its execution of new powers handed down at the start of last year, which allow the regulator to move more swiftly in cracking down on anti-competitive behaviour.

Under the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act, the CMA has designated Google's search and mobile businesses as having "strategic market status", along with Apple's mobile platform. It has also opened an investigation into Microsoft's software business.

Businesses with strategic market status can have conduct requirements imposed upon them, which are intended to improve competition for UK businesses and choice for consumers.

However, investigations into Amazon and Microsoft's cloud businesses resulted in them instead agreeing to voluntary commitments to lower exit fees and improve interoperability between different systems.

Bokkerink argued that the approach was not working for British businesses and consumers. "It effectively instructs the CMA to hold off any substantive action affecting the [Starmer] government's favoured few big-tech businesses," he said.

"So we've seen market power concentrate further, prices and economic dependency rise, constraints on customers stay in place — while UK tech investment is no more, and likely less, than it would be in a less-dominated, more-open playing field."

In a debate on British technology policy in the House of Lords in July, several peers also called on the Burnham government to reset the "strategic steer" given to the CMA.

The CMA said the regulator had "not waited to act" since the digital markets regime came into force. "Our interventions are already opening up opportunities for thousands of UK businesses, giving them greater choice, fairer access to customers and a stronger ability to compete and innovate in markets that have long been controlled by a small number of powerful global firms and there is more to come," it said.

KARWAI TANG/WIREIMAGE

David and Victoria Beckham at the premiere of last year's Netflix documentary about her fashion and beauty business, which has just recorded its first profit

First profit for Victoria Beckham

Isabella Fish Retail Editor

Victoria Beckham's fashion and beauty brand has turned a profit for the first time despite a testing macroeconomic slump affecting global luxury goods.

Revenue at Victoria Beckham Holdings rose 15 per cent to £129.8 million in the year to the end of December, marking the fifth consecutive year of double-digit revenue growth.

The label posted a pre-tax profit of £3.38 million, compared with a loss of £4.85 million the year before. It was the first profit since its launch in 2008. Operating profit reached £7.3 million, compared with a £1.6 million loss the previous year.

Sybille Darricarrère Lunel, chief executive, said: "Achieving our first operating profit is a landmark moment and reflects several years of disciplined execution and strategic investment. Delivering this result against a more challenging luxury market and macro backdrop makes it an even more significant milestone for the business."

Before its recent financial turnaround, the brand had accumulated over £66 million in losses, relying on multimillion-pound cash injections from her husband David Beckham's personal fortune.

The core reasons behind this prolonged struggle were laid bare in a Netflix show last year. The documentary, *Victoria Beckham*, revealed a corporate culture where employees were afraid to tell her "no", leading to out-of-control overhead expenses.

When the private equity investor David Belhassen stepped in to audit the business, he uncovered staggering examples of aesthetic perfection over fiscal reality. The company was spending £70,000 a year on office plants, with an external contractor paid £15,000 a year just to water them.

The company said yesterday that the improvement in its bottom line was driven by "disciplined cost control, stronger direct-to-consumer trading and an expanding international wholesale presence".

Need to know

1 The government's push for the UK's competition watchdog to prioritise economic growth over regulatory interference will continue under Andy Burnham, the business secretary has said, despite calls for tougher oversight of the world's largest technology companies to protect British businesses and consumers. Page 27

2 Navantia, the Spanish shipbuilder charged with constructing the crucial supply ships for the UK's aircraft carriers and naval strike force, has been told to speed up the delivery of the vessels to get the Royal Navy ready for conflict. Page 27

3 Victoria Beckham's fashion and beauty brand has turned a profit for the first time. Revenue at Victoria Beckham Holdings rose 15 per cent to £129.8 million in the year to the end of December, with operating profit coming in at £7.3 million. Page 27

4 The appetite for distinctive British experiences in London is something Nick Mackenzie, chief executive of Greene King, wants to capitalise on. He believes the capital is a crucial market for the pub sector, given its position as a key cultural hub for both tourists and locals. Page 30

5 Pessimism over the economic outlook among British businesses has fallen to its lowest level in almost two years, new surveys have suggested. While the CBI's latest growth indicator for the private sector recorded a weighted balance of -11 per cent, signalling that most businesses had told the lobby group they anticipated a decline in activity over the next three months, it is the brightest reading since November 2024. Page 31

6 The government can cut household energy bills by making old wind, solar and nuclear plants hand back some of their revenues from carbon tax windfalls, a think tank has suggested. Page 32

7 Foreign investment in the UK energy sector fell last year to the lowest level since 2013, driven by a collapse in the number of oil and gas projects. Page 32

"If you ask a robot to do something humans take for granted, there's a good chance it will fail

Katie Prescott, page 31

For expert business analysis subscribe to the business newsletter thetimes.com/newsletters

Musk aims for stars but

In the first of a five-part series **Louisa Clarence-Smith** asks whether the billionaire entrepreneur can achieve his dreams of conquering space

Elon Musk's SpaceX was a wild-card start-up when it was founded in 2002, selling a vision of science fiction to humanity. However, remarkably, it has developed a record of delivering on some of its far-fetched narratives.

First, Musk defied sceptics who said that making reusable rockets would not make sense financially, even if it was technologically achievable. In 2017, a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket recovered at sea blasted off for the second time, from Florida, in the first successful launch of a recycled orbital-class booster. Last year, SpaceX accounted for 95 per cent of all orbital launches in the US and more than half of all launches globally.

Second, SpaceX made a successful big bet on the internet constellation. Satellite internet had been around for decades when the space company launched Starlink to solve the slow speed of satellite internet.

However, SpaceX's innovation was to move satellites closer to earth. Last year there were more than 8,000 Starlink satellites in low Earth orbit, or the majority of all active satellites.

Now, Musk is selling even grander ambitions, from putting solar-powered data centres in space to energy production on Mars and building a launch system on the surface of the moon. Or in Musk's own words: "You want to wake up in the morning and think the future is going to be great — and that's what being a spacefaring civilisation is all about.

"It's about believing in the future and thinking that the future will be better than the past. And I can't think of anything more exciting than going out there and being among the stars."

Can he deliver?

DATA CENTRES IN SPACE

The next big landmark for SpaceX will be launching its first generation of orbital data centres, named Starmind AI-1. "This is not some sort of far-future distant thing," Musk said in August. "We expect to start launching these next year."

SpaceX's xAI, the maker of the Grok chatbot that was merged with SpaceX earlier this year, is already spending tens of billions of dollars building terrestrial data centres to provide the computing infrastructure needed to power generative AI.

However, Musk's long-term vision is to put data centres in space. The idea is that server racks, comparable to those found in data centres, will be able to sit inside satellites in orbit.

SpaceX's reusable rockets will be used to deploy the proposed huge AI compute satellite constellations, with potentially millions of satellites, for the orbital data centres.

"We believe these AI compute satellites in sun-synchronous orbit will be able to handle energy-intensive AI workloads ... at a far greater scale and efficiency than terrestrial alternatives, with Starlink providing low-latency, global connectivity linking these orbital AI systems to people around the world and delivering real-time intelligence," SpaceX said in its IPO prospectus.

Caleb Henry, director of research at Quilty Space, a space business intelligence firm, said: "Data centres are very power-hungry. It would need more power than a traditional satellite. That means it's going to need bigger solar arrays [a group of connected solar panels that capture sunlight and convert it into usable electricity].

"When you make bigger solar arrays, you need bigger power systems to accommodate it. The whole thing grows in size and Musk is very much in the camp that it can be done."

But can it? Henry said: "The natural answer is to say that it's ludicrous, but the SpaceX track record says to believe in Musk."

SATELLITES

Starlink is the only profitable division of SpaceX, delivering an adjusted profit of $7.2 billion last year. SpaceX has said it expects Starlink to represent a "significant portion" of global internet traffic in under than a decade and potentially deliver the majority of the world's internet in permitted countries. It also has an ambition to capture a meaningful share of the US mobile market.

Tim Farrar, president of TMF Associates, who has been consulting in the satellite and telecom industries for more than 30 years, said: "It seems certain that Starlink will capture and retain a very large and growing share of the commercial satellite communications market through the rest of this decade and likely beyond".

However, he is sceptical about Starlink's ability to steal customers away from terrestrial telecoms companies.

"I like to draw the parallel with Tesla where you know, they built this new electric car. But when they really tried to take on all the big car companies,

No end in sight for Capita pension crisis

Helen Cahill Financial Correspondent

The crisis in Capita's civil service pension contract has intensified after the waiting list for retirement quotes and bereavement payouts more than doubled to 30,061 at the start of August.

The London-listed outsourcer has seen its backlog of outstanding pension estimates almost double from 9,468 to 17,014 over the three weeks to August 7, while the waiting list for survivor benefits almost tripled from 4,750 to 13,047 as the group battles to get to grips with the scheme.

Capita is under pressure from the government to bring down its caseload and speed up processing after months of failure in the scheme, culminating in a profit warning for the group in July. The company said the investment required to bring operations up to the required standard would deliver a hit to adjusted operating profit of between £25 million and £40 million, prompting its shares to crater 57½p, or 20.7 per cent, to 221p on the day.

The outsourcer's shares have made a partial recovery to 280½p but the stock will be in focus again this week as management tries to meet delivery targets tied to the scheme, which has 1.7 million members. Capita has pledged to clear all of the cases that were outstanding as of June 30 by tomorrow, or to have referred any with gaps in the required information back to the relevant government department.

Jonathan Safir, deputy general secretary of the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance, a campaign group, said the problems in the scheme were "deeply concerning", adding: "We are hearing heartbreaking accounts of widows and widowers experiencing severe financial difficulties following the loss of a loved one, with some waiting months for survivor benefits that should have been paid promptly and their cases treated as a priority. These are not just administrative failures. Delayed pension payments are causing unnecessary distress and uncertainty for members and their families."

At a public hearing in July, Richard Holroyd, chief executive of Capita's public service division, said the company would make a loss on its £239 million contract. He said the company was investing in the scheme as it sought to restore its reputation with the Cabinet Office. Capita has 85 contracts across the government and the public sector and Cat Little, permanent secretary to the Cabinet Office, told MPs she had reminded top executives in meetings that the government was their "No 1 customer".

A spokeswoman for Capita said: "We continue to work at pace to resolve the operational issues in collaboration with the Cabinet Office. Despite the progress made to date, we recognise the service has not been good enough, particularly for members waiting on bereavement, retirement, and quotation cases, and we are sorry for the impact this has had on those members.

"We now have the processes, automation and technology in place to work through the backlog."

MoD wants supply ships built quicker

Continued from page 27

ships and capable of hosting helicopters on board, is an abject example of Britain's military spending and delivery troubles over the past decade and more.

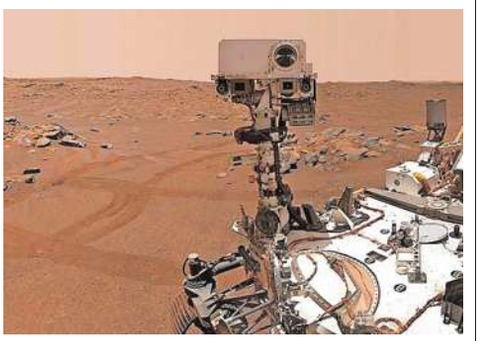
Britain only has one supply ship: 36 years old, reported to be in poor condition and out of service undergoing a refit.

After the identification of the need for modern supply ships to support the new Queen Elizabeth-class carriers by the Cameron government, by the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 there was still no final design and no construction yard had been chosen.

When the then-listed company of Harland & Wolff was awarded the contract, there had been uproar in some quarters because it was to be in a

gravity bends to no one

AUBREY GEMIGNANI/NASA; REUTERS



A SpaceX rocket launch at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida; Elon Musk, below left, has said his ultimate goal is to "make Star Trek real"; right, Nasa's Perseverance rover takes a "selfie" on Mars, the planet that is a key part of Musk's ambitions

eventually those people who were super slow moving eventually responded, and Tesla's now struggling in this massive industry," he said.

He believes Starlink will struggle to compete with the lower cost of a fibre connection relative to a satellite connection. "Even if they [Starlink] reduce their cost of delivering the gigabytes by an order of magnitude, they still won't come close to the cost of delivering gigabytes to people who are already connected to fibre," Farrar said.

"And so I think a lot of what Musk was saying, about the majority of the world's internet traffic, about 100,000 satellites, doesn't really add up. They're going to run out of customers because very few people are going to want to give up their fibre connection for a satellite connection, even if they improve it significantly from where it is at the moment."

LIFE ON MARS

Musk's big-picture mission for SpaceX is to "build the systems and technologies necessary to make life multiplanetary, to understand the true nature of the universe, and to extend the light of consciousness to the stars".

SpaceX's IPO prospectus includes an artist's visualisation of "life on Mars", featuring a rocket launch and buildings with people admiring the view from inside a glass structure.

The company says its goal is to first establish industry on the moon, as a stepping stone to Mars, serving as a proving ground for habitats, resource utilisation and Starship systems essential for long-term human survival beyond Earth.

Martin Rees, emeritus professor of cosmology and astrophysics at Cambridge University, said he thinks the idea of Mars as a "planet B" for human civilisation is a "dangerous delusion".

He said: "You've got to produce an atmosphere on Mars ... I don't think people would want to go unless you can make an Earth-like atmosphere, and that's hugely expensive.

"It doesn't disobey the laws of physics, but I don't think it would be popular." In his view, space is an "arena for robots".

With regards to Musk's plans to put rocket launchers on the moon, Rees said it "would be possible".

"Gravity on the moon is much weaker, so to escape from the moon is easier. And in fact, if you want to get to Mars, then there's a case for saying you should go to the moon or around the moon, then refuel and then go on to Mars."

TOMORROW

Inside the trillion-dollar race to commercialise space

technology partnership with Navantia, the first time a UK military vessel would have been constructed by an overseas company.

The schedule to build the fleet supply ships was then further delayed by the collapse of Harland & Wolff and was resurrected only when Navantia agreed to take on the contract in its entirety.

Martínez said a speedier delivery of the supply ships would be in the interests of not only the Royal Navy but Navantia itself.

"We want it to be a differentiator," Martínez said, ahead of MoD competitions to build new drone ships for the Royal Navy, mixing autonomous vessels in a reimagined "hybrid navy".

Navantia is also pitching to build eight new amphibious transport vessels, a toned-down version of the previous multi-role strike ships for the Royal Marines abandoned in the latest defence investment plan.

Martínez said that as the smallest of Britain's big shipyards, Appledore would be the ideal place to build the new uncrewed Type 91 weapons batteries, Type 92 submarine-hunters and Type 94 radar ships.

Shop price inflation hits two-year high

Isabella Fish Retail Editor

Shop price inflation hit a two-year high last month as rising energy and commodity costs pushed up prices for chocolate, sweets and coffee, adding further strain to household budgets. Prices rose by 1.5 per cent year-on-year in August, up sharply from 0.9 per cent in July, according to the latest BRC-NIQ Shop Price Monitor.

This was the highest rate of shop price inflation for more than two years, although it remains below the headline rate of consumer price inflation.

Helen Dickinson, chief executive of the British Retail Consortium, said: "The impact of higher energy, input and commodity costs is beginning to filter through into prices, particularly for ambient foods which are typically imported and processed. In non-food, electrical prices rose amid the ongoing AI boom, which is forcing up the price of memory chips and storage."

Households have been contending with elevated overall inflation. The Office for National Statistics reported that UK consumer price inflation rose to 2.9 per cent in July, up from 2.6 per cent in June. The CPIH measure, which also includes owner-occupiers' housing costs, increased to 3.1 per cent.

The rise in shop prices was pronounced in non-food goods, such as clothing and electrical items, accelerating to 0.9 per cent year-on-year in August, compared with 0.2 per cent in July.

Food inflation also increased, rising to 2.8 per cent from 2.2 per cent in July. Within food, however, there was a divergence between fresh and ambient products. Fresh food inflation eased slightly to 3 per cent in August, from 3.1 per cent in July, while ambient food inflation more than doubled to 2.5 per cent, up from 1.1 per cent.

Mike Watkins, head of retailer and business insight at NIQ, said the acceleration in food and non-food inflation was not unexpected as summer promotions came to an end. He added: "Retailers continue to keep prices low, helping consumers manage rising household costs such as energy and fuel. However, pressures are continuing to build across supply chains. We can expect price competition to intensify as we move into the autumn months."

Energy costs are emerging as a source of renewed inflationary pressure. ONS figures showed inflation in housing and household services jumping to 4.1 per cent in July, from 2.7 per cent the previous month, driven by higher gas prices. Gas prices were 14.7 per cent higher than a year earlier, while electricity prices rose 3.6 per cent.

The squeeze on households is expected to intensify if energy costs stay elevated. Yesterday the Centre for Economics and Business Research warned that the Middle East conflict was likely to strip £70.4 billion from UK households' real spending power over the next two years as higher energy prices fuelled inflation and weakened wage growth. It estimated the effect of the war would leave household spending power £1,100 lower than previously expected in 2026 and £1,300 lower in 2027.

The week ahead

After a surprise contraction in the US labour market in July, economists are expecting a modest rebound in hiring for the month of August.

Barclays has forecast that the US employment report, which is due out on Friday, will show that non-farm payroll employment grew by 25,000 last month, following a decline in July of 23,000, a May gain of 63,000 and a June advance of 20,000.

The bank expects the unemployment rate to remain stable at 4.1 per cent.

Thomas Simons, chief US economist at Jefferies, the investment bank, said recent US payroll data suggested that "there is a modest, steady pace of private sector job creation that is in line with the amount necessary to keep the unemployment rate steady".

TOMORROW

Half-year results for Cairn Homes, Ireland's biggest housebuilder, will show a sharp increase in both output and profitability.

The company said in July that it delivered 1,130 homes in the first six months of 2026 and generated revenues of about €450 million, both about 60 per cent higher than in the first half of 2025.

Shane Carberry, a housebuilding analyst at Goodbody, expects Cairn to report an operating profit of about €73 million, a year-on-year increase of more than 70 per cent.

Investors are set to receive an interim dividend of 4.5 cents a share, but Carberry believes Cairn is throwing off enough cash to "return meaningful capital to shareholders" over the coming years and expects an update on this alongside the results.

Interims: Cairn Homes, TT Electronics

THURSDAY

Shareholders in M&G will be keen to learn whether or not the fund manager has maintained the positive inflow of investor money with its interim results after a decent, rather than spectacular first quarter. Updates on the revamped Wealth platform and its cautious return to bulk annuities would also be welcome. The consensus among City analysts is that assets under management will benefit from a net inflow of £1.9 billion with half-year revenues of £568 million and total adjusted operating profits of £429 million.

Interims: Alfa Financial Software, Eurocell, Gem Diamonds, Grafton Group, Hilton Foods, M&G, Rosebank Industries

Finals: Brooks Macdonald

Trading updates: Safestore, Watches of Switzerland

Economy: S&P Global UK services PMI

FRIDAY

No major company announcements scheduled.

Economy: SMMT UK monthly car registration figures; S&P Global UK construction PMI; US employment report

Business

Happy hour for Greene King's 'core' pubs

Jessica Newman
Leisure Industries Correspondent

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER JACK HILL; GREENE KING

The London Apprentice in Isleworth is among the pubs singled out for extra investment by Greene King's chief executive Nick Mackenzie, left

No one does a pub like the British. We have quaint village locals, modern city boozers, pubs with all the sports forever on, and centuries-old taverns tucked away in historic streets. They are woven into the national fabric and are surely one of the UK's most enduring attractions.

While there are fantastic watering holes up and down the country, British pub culture is perhaps nowhere more vividly expressed than in London; the capital's position on the global stage acts as a cultural landmark for international and domestic investors.

Polling conducted for the British Beer and Pub Association last year found 86 per cent of Britons view pubs as important for tourism. This appetite for distinctive British experiences in the capital is something Nick Mackenzie wants to capitalise on. The chief executive of Greene King, one of the country's largest pub companies, believes London is a crucial market for the company as well as the rest of the pub sector given its position as a "key cultural hub" for tourists and locals.

Thirty-nine pubs in central London, "the core of the core" of Greene King's 2,500-strong UK estate, are on the receiving end of a multimillion-pound investment programme this year, Mackenzie said. So far in 2026 the company has invested more than £6 million in 20 of its pubs dotted around central London, including managed pubs — those Greene King operates itself — and tenanted and leased pubs, where it lets the property to another operator and supplies them with beer, and its franchised pubs.

Greene King is planning to invest in a further 19 central London pubs this year, bringing the overall projected spend in this part of the portfolio to around £15 million, which will be about a third more than was spent last year.

The extra investment provides an opportunity to "realise the potential of these characterful pubs", Mackenzie said, adding that it was imperative these pubs adapt to customers' changing expectations in today's tough economic environment.

For Greene King, the decision to double down on the capital was driven by a strong belief in London's enduring pulling power. After a torrid few years following the pandemic, Mackenzie reckons that the capital's pub scene is roaring back to life.

"People still want to come into pubs as tourists ... and they want a London pub experience, they want a cold pint of beer, they want fish and chips."

Beyond offering tourists a quintessential British experience, there is an undeniable commercial incentive. These central London pubs are among the group's most profitable, though Mackenzie declines to name them.

The scale of the makeover is as varied as the buildings themselves. Mayfair's Three Jolly Butchers, formerly the King's Arms, has been stripped back to its roots. It has reverted to the name it held when it opened in the 1740s and its tired interiors have been refreshed with vintage artwork, rich burgundy walls and floral touches.

Meanwhile, the Lord Raglan in Holborn has been renovated to cater to the growing appetite for active entertainment by turning one floor over to digital darts lanes and pool tables.

Mackenzie says the investments are paying off and the company is recording "very good returns". For example, online bookings at the Blue Posts, tucked around the corner from the Ritz in St James's, rose threefold in the four weeks after the pub reopened in April following a makeover featuring new sound systems and upgraded TV screens to lure in sports fans and office workers.

Similarly, works to modernise the 15th-century London Apprentice in Isleworth, west London, while preserving the Tudor and Georgian features and 17th-century ceiling murals, has translated into higher footfall. Sales rose 110 per cent year-on-year in the four weeks after it reopened in July.

Mackenzie insists that Greene King's investment decisions hinge on far more than just high footfall. In many cases the viability of an expensive refurbishment project in the capital rests on the ability to utilise outdoor space, which acts as a crucial lever for trade.

He said that even a hint of uncertainty, such as a council's potential refusal of an outdoor licence, was enough to pause investment plans.

He is not a fan of the draft licensing proposals set out in August by Westminster council, whose jurisdiction includes the West End and Soho — a vibrant hub of nightlife, culture and restaurants that is a magnet for tourism.

The council has proposed "the introduction of measures to reduce the extent of, or remove opportunities for, vertical drinking". To the layman, "vertical drinking" is drinking while standing up. For Mackenzie, such restrictions miss the point entirely. "The backlash was important because customers want to stand up in pubs and that's typically what London pubs are about," he says. "It's massively important not only to the culture but to the economics of us refurbishing our pubs."

Bingo gives the young crowd a real buzz

Jessica Newman

Buzz Bingo said the appeal to younger demographics was a long-term trend

Buzz Bingo's attempts to attract a new generation of players appears to be paying off as half of the 190,000 new customers it welcomed to its clubs last year were younger than 35.

Buzz, formerly Gala Bingo, said that sales were boosted last year by making its 76 bingo halls more appealing to a tech-savvy generation. It launched self-service kiosks to book and pay for games and introduced 10,000 new electronic bingo terminals and QR codes to top up players' accounts.

"The appeal of bingo to younger demographics has been a long-term trend and our decision to invest in clubs and online has started to pay off," Dominic Mansour, chief executive, said. The "long-term sustainability" of the business depended on an influx of new players, he added.

As well as welcoming almost 100,000 new under-35s in 2025, Buzz said the number of customers under 25 rose 16 per cent in the second half of the year as the refurbishment of seven of its bingo halls started to bear fruit.

"More Gen Zs and millennials are embracing bingo as a fun, affordable night out," Mansour said. He added that the results from the upgraded venues had exceeded the company's forecasts, outperforming the rest of its portfolio by 20 per cent on admissions.

Buzz rang up £192.3 million in sales from its bingo halls in 2025, 11 per cent higher than the previous year, boosting overall revenues by 11 per cent to £241.4 million. Digital sales rose to £49.1 million, from £44.2 million a year earlier as the number of customers using online games rose 18 per cent year-on-year.

However, the company highlighted recent increases in employers' national insurance contributions and the national minimum wage as a "substantial and largely unavoidable cost headwind for the group".

Buzz employs more than 2,000 people. It blamed higher employment costs for a 6 per cent fall in underlying profits to £39.2 million over the period.

On a pre-tax level, losses rose to £65 million, up from £33 million the year before. The company said it took an £18.5 million goodwill impairment triggered by a revision to the group's forecast cashflows after being hit with higher remote gaming duty. The directors have not proposed a dividend.

Its venues include the UK's biggest bingo club in Cricklewood, London.

London flat prices dive as sellers accept reality

Jack Barnett Economics Correspondent

London is home to the top five areas in the UK that have suffered the sharpest fall in flat prices, and apartments in high-net-worth boroughs such as Westminster and the City have declined by more than a fifth over the past year, official figures show.

Analysis of Office for National Statistics data by The Times revealed that prices have dropped most steeply in the most expensive areas of the capital.

In Westminster, the average price of a flat slid by 25.4 per cent on an annual basis in June, down to £758,103, while a decline of 20.4 per cent was registered in the City over the same period, taking prices down to £712,585. Prices dropped by 15.3 per cent in Kensington & Chelsea to £991,929, and 13.3 per cent in Hammersmith & Fulham to £561,089.

A combination of sky-high prices making flats unaffordable, punitively steep service charges on some leasehold properties and people wanting more space has hit the city's central boroughs in particular.

James Stevenson, a managing director at Foxtons, said: "Higher mortgage rates and stamp duty costs have disproportionately affected affordability for first-time buyers, who make up a large share of flat purchasers in London."

Richard Donnell, executive director at Zoopla, said: "Inner-London house prices have been static or trending lower for a decade, and this is a step change lower as sellers accept the market clearing price for their home as mortgage rates remain higher."

Across the capital as a whole, flat prices dropped by 4.7 per cent in the year to June to £431,036, which Robert Oatley, director at the Winkworth Pimlico & Westminster branch, said was down to an abundance of apartments coming on the market.

Katie Prescott

Robots are just like children — one day they will make us proud

Tech leaders are ramping up warnings about the advent of artificial general intelligence (AGI), the term for the most advanced AI. As capable as a human, able to tackle any cognitive task, rather than just the one it was built for.

Most prominently, Sir Demis Hassabis has said he is stepping away from the day-to-day of Google DeepMind as chief executive, to shift his focus towards the impact of the tech on science, safety and society.

So far, this is a story about the world of ideas. But how long will it take to put this kind of AGI superbrain, this extraordinary ability, into the physical world?

Sure, the most advanced AI can pass the Bar exam but if you ask a robot to do something that humans take for granted, like picking up a pencil, there's a good chance it will fail.

This is known as Moravec's paradox: the observation that things that feel hard for humans, like chess, are easy for robots, but things that are automatic and easy for us, like folding the washing or loading the dishwasher, are monumentally hard for robots (I can feel some family rows coming on over which domestic chores are "easy" and should be "automatic").

Many believe an inflection point is coming. The founder of China's recently listed Unitree Robotics, which shot to prominence with its backflipping robots, has said that humanoid robots will have their "ChatGPT moment" within the next ten years, a reference to the moment when the world realised the capabilities of generative AI and it became widely adopted.

The holy grail of what's known as embodied AI — artificial intelligence that acts through a physical body to understand and interact with the real world — is robots that can be put in an unfamiliar environment, understand it, and then complete tasks on their own initiative or in response to a simple instruction. This is a very hard problem to solve. (My children are yet to have their own ChatGPT moment.)

Naturally, the headlines around physical AI have focused on the humanoids which have been jumping, running, crashing and combusting at the recent Beijing robot Olympics. But the application of AI in the physical world extends far beyond this, into driverless cars, warehouses, industrial and agricultural work, systems that can inspect bridges and monitor the environment. The list goes on.

CHEN SIYANG/VCG

Robots have taken running on a track extremely quickly in their stride

Interest in the area is rising. Just in the past week, Anthropic made its first foray into physical AI, launching a framework for linking large language models (LLMs) with equipment, so that AI can operate machines. Essentially creating a connective tissue between the AI models that companies like Anthropic make and factories or labs.

For the home market, Hugging Face, the AI model hub just bought by Nvidia, has released a little robotic duck for $399, meant to be a cheap, hands-on entry point into physical AI, a "Tamagotchi you train with reinforcement learning", according to Gadget Review. It can sense its surroundings, act without you controlling every move and improve as it goes. Pre-orders surpassed $2.6 million within the first 24 hours.

Yes, much of the physical AI action has been in the US and China, but money is pouring into the space here too. Robotics companies alone in the UK, which do not cover the breadth of "physical AI", have raised $258 million so far in 2026, a significant increase from $150 million last year, according to August data from Tracxn Technologies.

Two companies took the bulk of this: Humanoid, making humanoid robots, which raised $152 million, valuing it at $1.35 billion, and Automata, building automation for science labs, which raised $45 million (without disclosing its value). Investment is also flowing into the plumbing underneath robotics. The British start-up Embedd revealed last week that it had raised $2.7 million to develop software for integrating chips into physical AI systems.

Most striking is the work UK companies are doing in the "brains layer" of physical AI, with one company in particular standing out: Wayve, the driverless car company which I wrote about for our Titans of AI series last week. Backed by Softbank and Nvidia with a valuation of $8.6 billion, it is a singular UK success story, another tech business born in Cambridge, where most of the UK's robotics funding is concentrated.

Just as LLMs are the foundation of chatbots, vast databases of written content to predict and generate human-like language, "world models" underpin advances in physical AI. These are databases of information which look at how the world behaves. While Britain missed the large language model (LLM) race, it may not be missing this one.

In order to fulfil its aim of making cars that can "think" for themselves, Wayve has created a series of world models called Gaia, enormous databases of driving information, some derived from the grocery delivery vans of partnerships they formed with companies like Asda and Ocado.

Crucially, it sees a massive opportunity in embodied AI beyond driverless cars. It recently hived off a division of the business called Wayve Labs, dedicated to researching how you put advanced AI in the physical world "safely and intuitively" with the premise that "intelligence that cannot act in the physical world is incomplete".

But even as Wayve pushes toward the frontier of physical AI, it is held back by more mundane realities, such as the recent news that driverless car companies are still waiting for guidance from Transport for London to roll out robotaxis.

A reminder that getting AI into the world at large is a marathon, not a 100m humanoid robotic sprint past Usain Bolt at the Beijing games.

PS Fancy a new job? X Money, Elon Musk's financial platform, is recruiting for a "talented software engineer" in London as it expands in the UK and Europe. Sure, the takeover of Twitter did not burnish the gazillionaire's reputation as the most sympathetic boss, but perhaps the base salary of up to £262,000 a year might tempt you? Or the mission? As Musk expands his business empire, the company aims to "rival the world's largest financial institutions" with a target of up to 600 million users.

Katie Prescott is Technology Business Editor of The Times

Gloom lifts a little but budget fears still linger

Emma Powell

Pessimism about the economic outlook among British businesses has fallen to its lowest level in almost two years. However, they expect uncertainty in the run-up to the chancellor's first budget to hold back growth and investment, new surveys suggest.

Although the CBI's latest growth indicator for the private sector recorded a weighted balance of minus 11 per cent, signalling that most businesses anticipated a decline in activity over the next three months, it is the brightest reading since November 2024.

The improvement has been led by business and professional services companies and manufacturers, who expect only a modest decline in output.

Alpesh Paleja, the CBI's deputy chief economist, said: "It's encouraging that expectations for growth are the least negative in two years, which chimes with signs of resilience in other economic indicators. But the outlook is very mixed across sectors, with conditions more difficult among household-facing firms." The research painted "a picture of a tentative move towards stabilisation, rather than strong, sustained growth", he said.

The CBI's findings were reinforced by a separate survey of business leaders by the Institute of Directors, which found that optimism rose last month regarding sales and hiring intentions.

The IoD directors' economic confidence index, which tracks business leaders' sentiment about the economy, rose to minus 49 in August, from minus 63 in July, the highest since January.

However, caution remained over future tax rises and general policy uncertainty before John Healey's first budget on October 28.

UK economic conditions remain the most significant factor affecting businesses, according to the poll, followed by concerns about an increase in employment and business taxes.

Anna Leach, chief economist at the IoD, said improved confidence was not driven by a "Burnham bounce".

"In fact, business leaders said that Andy Burnham and the new cabinet had on balance reduced their optimism regarding both the UK economy and their own organisations. While some appreciated the change in tone and the devolution agenda, the majority were concerned about unfunded spending commitments and the likelihood of further tax increases, with others staying on the fence until post-budget."

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CHRISTOPHER FURLONG/GETTY IMAGES

Carbon taxes make the price of offshore wind energy more competitive

Carbon tax 'rebate' could cut energy bills

Emily Gosden Energy Editor

The government can cut household energy bills by making old wind, solar and nuclear plants hand back some of their revenues from carbon tax windfalls, a think tank has suggested.

Older low-carbon power plants are sharing in a multibillion-pound profit boost as an indirect result of the UK's carbon tax regime, the Energy Competitiveness Unit says. These taxes are levied on gas plants, pushing up their costs and in turn increasing the price of electricity for the whole market.

"What is a carbon tax to a gas generator is extra profit to a low-carbon merchant plant," the ECU says in a report. "This creates a distortion between what [the] Treasury collects in tax receipts and what consumers pay. On average between 2023 and 2025, every £1 raised by carbon taxes on the power sector costs consumers around £2 on domestically generated electricity."

Low-carbon generators that benefit should be made to pay back the share of wholesale market revenues that is estimated to come from the carbon tax, the ECU argues.

This "decarbonisation rebate" could deliver total savings of £7.3 billion between 2027 and 2030, peaking at as much as £2.7 billion next year, it estimates. This would benefit both households and businesses and translate to a saving of up to £31 for the average household next year, it says in a report.

The ECU is a new initiative by Project Tempo, a European not-for-profit organisation focused on designing energy transition policies with public support.

The proposal is the latest in a series of ideas that have been advanced to address the fact that expensive gas plants overwhelmingly set Britain's wholesale electricity price. Gas accounted for only 32 per cent of generation last year but set the market price 82 per cent of the time, the ECU report says. The issue has come back into focus after the US war on Iran led to a spike in gas prices that also inflated electricity prices.

Most newer renewable plants have been built with "contracts for difference" to guarantee them a fixed price for 15 years, irrespective of market price fluctuations: the difference is either subsidised or paid back to consumers. But older plants are still exposed to the market price.

The government in April vowed to "break [the] link between gas and electricity prices" through plans to encourage older plants to sign up for voluntary contracts for difference to lock in lower but guaranteed prices. It also increased and extended the electricity generators levy, a windfall tax on such plants that was introduced when prices spiked after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

£31
Possible annual saving for the average household next year
Source: Energy Competitiveness Unit

One source at a generator targeted by the ECU proposal said the existence of the windfall tax would complicate attempts to calculate the benefit it was getting from the carbon tax.

Other suggestions included proposals that gas power plants be taken out of the wholesale electricity market entirely and operated as a strategic reserve with regulated revenues.

A spokesman for the energy department said: "We are pushing ahead with plans to break the link ... with renewables setting the price more of the time and fixed price contracts helping protect families and businesses from higher bills when gas prices spike."

Foreign investment in power projects falls to 13-year low

Emily Gosden

Foreign investment in the UK energy sector declined to the lowest level since 2013 last year, driven by a collapse in the number of oil and gas projects.

The number of energy-related foreign direct investment (FDI) projects that were approved last year dropped by 51 per cent to 27 from 55 projects in 2024, according to EY's 2026 UK Attractiveness Survey. It is the second year running of decline and the lowest number since 2013, when only 14 such projects got the go-ahead.

The decline was driven by an 81 per cent drop in oil and gas projects attracting foreign direct investment. There were only three last year, down from 16 in 2024, and the same level seen in 2023, according to the survey. The North Sea oil industry has been warning for some time that the high tax environment is a deterrent to investment.

Overall the UK maintained its second place behind France in the ranking of European countries' attractiveness to foreign investors, according to the professional services firm. The number of FDI projects in energy across Europe fell 36 per cent year on year.

EY's interviews with 360 decision-makers found they perceived the three main disadvantages of investing in the UK to be the high cost of energy, political instability, and high labour and other input costs.

Annie Graham, industrials and energy leader at EY, said: "Energy is a critical sector for capital investment in its own right, but is also a key enabler for successful investment in energy-intensive industries, such as AI data centres and steel.

"The UK has an opportunity to support future investment in the sector and build on its perceived advantages around renewable energy by accelerating grid connection times and wider planning reform to persuade developers to contribute capital to energy infrastructure.

"With high energy costs for business continuing to be a key concern for international investors, initiatives to encourage greater domestic energy production are also welcome."

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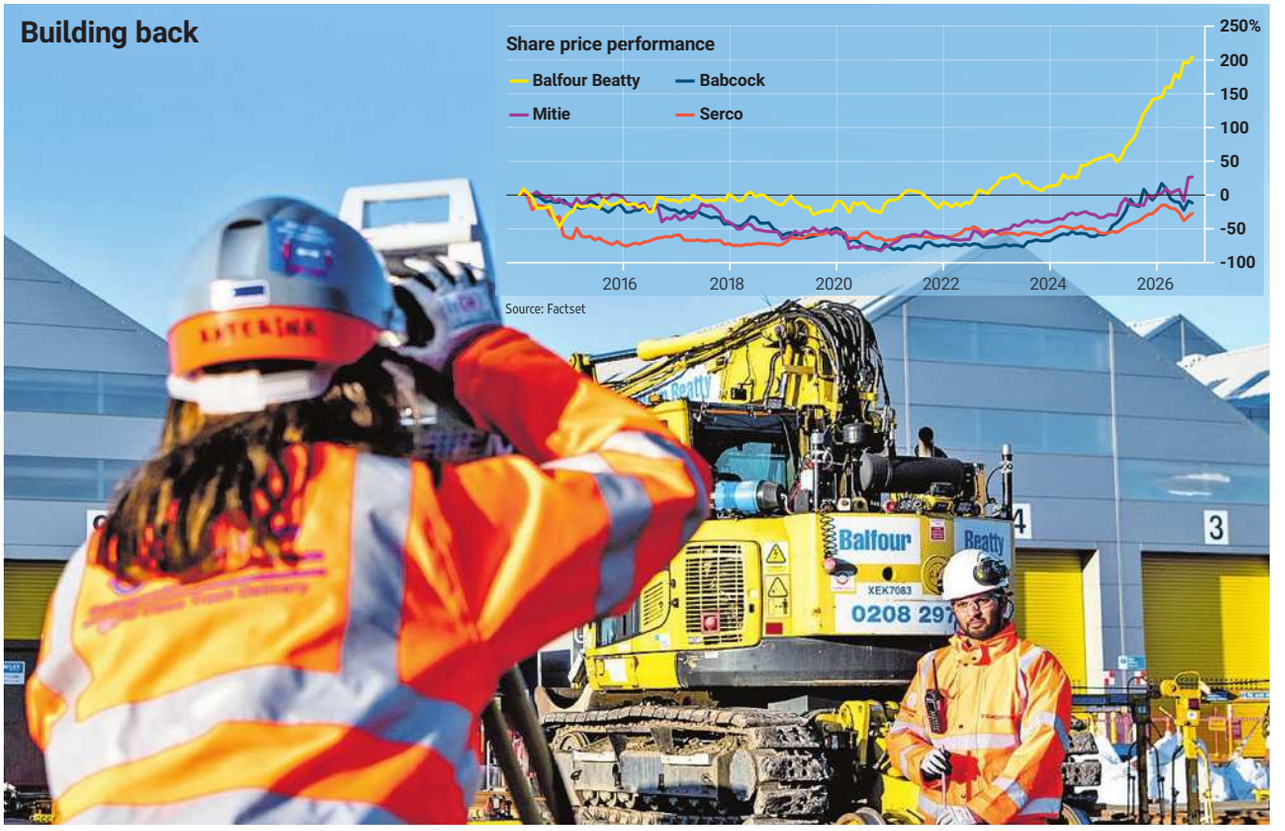
Mission possible: from crisis to quality

A decade on: how four chief executives rescued the contracting sector against the odds. **Robert Lea** reports



They are the Ethan Hunts of their corporate generation. And even if each of them would scoff at comparison with a good-looking, all-action Hollywood character, they did do all their own stunts and like in the films, the missions they chose to accept didn't turn out to be impossible after all.

A decade ago, much of the government contracting sector, the companies behind the shadow privatisation of public sector services in the Major and Blair years, was in crisis, caught up in hubris, mismanagement and accounting sleight of hand bordering in some cases on a cooking of the books.

Some such as Carillion and Interserve would not make it. Others such as Capita have yet to recover. But running towards the gunfire came four executives to save Serco, Balfour Beatty, Mitie and Babcock, businesses delivering services in numerous sectors all affecting British daily life.

Now, their missions are complete.

David Lockwood is in the process of stepping away from Babcock, having lifted the company into the FTSE 100 as a military services powerhouse. The success of Phil Bentley's turnaround at Mitie, the sprawling facilities management group, has rewarded investors with a £3.1 billion takeover by a larger rival, which is likely to hasten his already signalled departure.

Their exits from the stage come after similarly completed rescue assignments at Serco by Rupert Soames and at Balfour Beatty by Leo Quinn, both companies lifted back to respectability following near-death experiences in 2014 and 2015, respectively.

Each had a different Augean stable to clean out and did so with a hosing down of onerous contracts, provisions for future losses and fundraisings.

At Serco, Soames said he inherited "a pile of manure" and claimed that much of the job was to restore morale where an ethos of public service had been undermined by what he saw as the "poor ethical standards" of the previous regime.

At Balfour Beatty, Quinn said the company had forgotten the simple things: put the financial controls in place, accept only profitable work, do the job and don't foul up, track the cash and collect it.

At Mitie, Bentley moved to get out of low-margin businesses such as catering and domiciliary care, and use new technology to upscale the company from caretaking to being an adviser to customers on matters such as energy efficiency.

At Babcock, Lockwood found a federated business, a company that had remained disaggregated after a decade of acquisitions that had not been integrated, and a culture of people working in silos.

Rupert Soames said he inherited a "pile of manure" at Serco

Each of the executives brought a different temperament to the job. Undoubtedly "big characters", as the euphemism had it, they all brought the immediacy of their insight into what had gone wrong and their ability to communicate how they were going to get their businesses out of the accumulated effluence.

And there was something else that binded them: off duty they all have a certain mischievousness, marking the turnaround specialist as not being cut from the same off-the-peg cloth as most executives.

Speaking recently about such corporate rescue acts, Milly Camley, chief executive at the Institute for Turnaround, said the trick was to avoid "management fatigue".

Responding to one crisis after another, year after year, takes a toll, she said. The successful do not get consumed by the day-to-day demands. They find the space to lift their eyes from the immediate problem, think structurally about the long term, take hard decisions early enough to matter and implement new propositions.

The less successful can succumb to executive suite exhaustion, which leads to problem avoidance and then a reliance on hope that conditions will improve and that markets might turn. As Camley says: "Hope is not a strategy."

Stephen Rawlinson, an independent financial analyst and long-time observer of the government contractors sector, said the conditions that paved the way for the appointments for Soames, Quinn, Bentley and Lockwood were twofold. He argued that across much of the sector there had been a generation of "clever but flawed characters who got carried away" and whose tenures generally did not end happily.

And that the edifices they constructed came with the help of finance directors who knew how to mobilise lax accounting rules to hide the accumulated debt or cash outflows of invoice discounting and the cost of bidding for and starting fresh contracts.

"The magic trick was that they could show net cash and growing profits while 'hiding' debt in the balance sheet under other items," Rawlinson said. The apparent financial success kept the executive bonuses rolling and was reflected in the share price. The investment community and lenders appeared happy either to turn a blind eye or simply lacked an appreciation of what was taking place.

Rawlinson's view was that it was not just the leadership of the chief executives brought in to clear up the mess that rescued these companies. It was also the personally chosen finance directors "empowered and determined to present clean accounts".

Soames would refer fondly to Angus Cockburn, brought with him from their gig at Aggreko, as his "wingman". Lockwood brought David Mellors with him to Babcock, having previously been the double act leading Cobham.

Phil Harrison has just retired from Balfour Beatty after being appointed soon after the arrival of Quinn. Harrison has been praised as "instrumental" in Balfour Beatty's ascent into the FTSE 100. Bentley, a qualified accountant, had himself been an experienced numbers man, having had seven years as finance director of Centrica.

All have made good money completing their missions, yet what also binds these chief executives who rescued the contracting sector is their willingness to continue to run toward that gunfire, even so late in their careers.

Soames, 67, took on the chairmanship of the CBI just when it seemed the business organisation was about to implode under its own misdemeanours.

Quinn, 69, has taken on the task of rescuing the struggling WH Smith as its full-time executive chairman.

Bentley, 67, has made it known that he has the appetite for a big and/or tricky chairmanship.

At 64, the cadet of the quartet, Lockwood is unlikely to disappear into cosy retirement.

Eon UK boss will not rule out job cuts after merger with Ovo

Emma Powell

The UK boss of Eon has refused to rule out job cuts as part of its merger with Ovo, as it eyes potential cost savings from a deal that will create the UK's largest energy supplier.

Chris Norbury, who leads the German utility group's British operations, said the combination with the UK challenger would bring economies of scale, which could include technology savings and removing duplicate roles across the combined company.

"I'm not going to be disingenuous with colleagues, with the trade unions that we have a very close, very good working relationship with — there is a synergies case there," Norbury said. "How we do that, it's too early at this point to say."

Eon employs about 8,000 people in the UK, while Ovo's headcount totals almost 4,000. It is understood no formal consultations have been launched with unions over possible job losses.

Identifying sources of potential savings would be done "in a very pragmatic and practical way", Norbury said. The supplier is also considering switching from using Octopus's Kraken software platform to Ovo's Kaluza.

Greater scale would allow the company to improve the range of products available to customers and help bring energy bills down, Norbury said.

The enlarged business will bring together Ovo's four million customers with Eon's 5.6 million, leapfrogging Octopus. The value of the deal was not disclosed but the Financial Times has reported it could be up to £600 million.

Ovo has endured a tumultuous history since being founded by the entrepreneur Stephen Fitzpatrick in 2009. Last year pre-tax losses increased to £71 million, from £61 million in 2024, according to its latest accounts filed at Companies House.

Before the sale, Ovo had been working with bankers from Rothschild to secure more funds as it sought to shore up its balance sheet. After warning that it had not met capital adequacy requirements last year, it said it had been given more time by Ofgem to build up its capital buffer, as long as it marked out clear steps that would show its progress towards the objective.

The Eon-Ovo deal will reduce the UK's energy market from six to five large suppliers and is subject to a review by the Competition and Markets Authority.

Norbury said: "What we had four or five years ago was 50, 60 suppliers, many of whom were pricing at a loss and using customer credit balances [as] working capital... today, the range of products that are on offer to customers is much greater than it was ... then."

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
BUSINESS AND PROPERTY COURTS
OF ENGLAND AND WALES
COMPANIES COURT (ChD)

CR-2026-005429

IN THE MATTER OF SEGRO PLC
and
IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2006

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, by an order dated on or around 28 August 2026 made in the above matters, the High Court of Justice in England and Wales has given permission for SEGRO plc (the "**Company**") to convene a meeting (the "**Court Meeting**") of the Scheme Shareholders as at the Voting Record Time (each as defined in the Scheme Document, which is referred to below) for the purpose of considering and, if thought fit, approving (with or without modification) a scheme of arrangement proposed to be made pursuant to Part 26 of the Companies Act 2006 (the "**Companies Act**") between the Company and the Scheme Shareholders (the "**Scheme**") and that such meeting will be held at the offices of UBS at 5 Broadgate, London, EC2M 2QS on 28 September 2026 at 11.00am (London time), at which place and time all Scheme Shareholders are requested to attend.

Any Scheme Shareholder wishing to vote at the Court Meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy by following the instructions set out in the document of which the Scheme forms part, dated 1 September 2026 and addressed to the shareholders of the Company (the "**Scheme Document**").

At the Court Meeting, voting will be by poll and each Scheme Shareholder present in person or by proxy will be entitled to one vote for each Scheme Share (as defined in the Scheme Document) held as at the Voting Record Time. The approval required at the Court Meeting is a majority in number of the Scheme Shareholders who are present and vote, whether in person or by proxy, at the Court Meeting and who represent 75 per cent. or more in value of the Scheme Shares voted by those Scheme Shareholders.

It is important that, for the Court Meeting, as many votes as possible are cast so that the Court may be satisfied that there is a fair and reasonable representation of opinion of the Scheme Shareholders. Whether or not you intend to attend and/or vote at the Court Meeting, you are therefore strongly advised to appoint a proxy in the manner described in the Scheme Document. Doing so will not prevent you from attending, speaking and voting at the Court Meeting or any adjournment or postponement thereof, if you so wish and are so entitled.

Any Scheme Shareholder who has not received a BLUE form of proxy should request this from the Company's registrars, Equiniti Limited ("Equiniti"), by calling the shareholder helpline between 8.30 a.m. and 5.30 p.m. (London time) Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays in England and Wales) on +44 (0)371 384 2614 (the "**Shareholder Helpline**"), or by submitting a request in writing to Equiniti at Highdown House, Yeoman Way, Worthing, West Sussex, BN99 6DA.

A copy of the Scheme Document, which contains, among other things, details of the Scheme and a copy of the explanatory statement required to be furnished pursuant to section 897 of the Companies Act, is available from the Company's website at https://www.segro.com/investors. A Scheme Shareholder who wishes to receive a hard copy of the Scheme Document may request one from Equiniti by calling the Shareholder Helpline or writing to Equiniti's address (set out above), with an address to which the hard copy may be sent. Scheme Shareholders may also visit https://shareview.info/segroshareoffer/ for further information.

Dated: 1 September 2026

Slaughter and May
One Bunhill Row
London EC1Y 8YY
Solicitors for the Company

The Times unit trust information service

ALLIANZ GLOBAL INVESTORS
Inv Serv: 020 7065 1400 Helpline: 0800 317 573

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Strategic Bond Fund ‡	129.79		...	8.08
UK Equity A ‡	400.99		...	3.94
UK Growth ‡	10401.51		...	2.22

ARTEMIS FUND MGRS
0800 092 2051

Authorised Inv Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Global Income Fund R Acc ‡	386.22		...	...
Global Income Fund R Inc ‡	217.19		...	...
Global Select Fund R ‡	231.69		...	...
High Income Fund R Inc ‡	66.95		...	...
Income Fund R Acc ‡	803.38		...	...
Income Fund R Inc ‡	307.92		...	...
Monthly Dist & R Inc ‡	93.13		...	...
SmartGarp Eurp Equity R ‡	894.91		...	...
SmartGarp Global Equity R ‡	702.98		...	...
SmartGarp UK Equity R ‡	4285.69		...	...
Strategic Assets R Acc ‡	96.07		...	...
Strategic Bd R M Acc ‡	116.47		...	...
Strategic Bd R M Inc ‡	52.66		...	...
Strategic Bd R Q Acc ‡	116.27		...	...
Strategic Bd R Q Inc ‡	52.52		...	...
UK Select R Acc ‡	1335.42		...	...
Uk Smaller Cos R Acc ‡	2361.39		...	...
UK Special Sits R Acc ‡	1097.05		...	...

AXA FRAMLINGTON UNIT MGMT
Dling: 0845 602 1952 Priv Clients:0845 777 5511

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Health ‡	3459		...	...
UK Select Opps Inc ‡	2136		...	1.10
UK Sml Cos Inc ‡	333.4		...	0.37
UK Sust Eqty R Dis ‡	237.2		...	1.10

AXA FUND MANAGERS
Admin & Enq 0117 989 0808

UK/Global Investment Companies

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Global Gwth Acc R ‡	288.1		...	0.52
Japan Acc A ‡	162.3		...	1.51

CIS UNIT MANAGERS
08457 46 46 46

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
European Growth ‡	298.5		...	1.14
Sus Leaders ‡	1026		...	1.47
UK Growth ‡@	877.2		...	1.69
UK Income ‡@	259.3		...	3.83

CLOSE FUND MANAGEMENT
Dealing 020 7426 6232

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Winchester ‡	5745.61		...	0.60

COLUMBIA THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS
Enqs:0870 601 6183 Dealing: 0870 6083

Share Class 1-Retail

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Gwth & Inc ‡	1607		...	0.10
FTSE All Shr Track ‡	598.2		...	2.70
Global Gwth SCI ‡	404.4		...	...
Strategic Bd ‡	228.5		...	4.00

EDENTREE INV MGMT
0800 358 3010

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Sust Eur Eqty A Dis ‡	496.8		...	1.84
Sust Gbl Eqty A Dis ‡@	459.2		...	0.53
Sust Mgd Income ‡@	141.2		...	4.02
Sust Sterling Bond A Dis ‡@	85.03		...	4.99
Sust UK Eqty A Dis ‡@	253.8		...	1.77
Sust UK Eqty Opps A Dis ‡	328.8		...	1.47

FIDELITY INTERNATIONAL
Private Clnts:0800 414161 Broker Dlgs:0800 414181

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Spec ‡	2917		...	...
American ‡	8020		...	...
Euro Opps ‡	748.3		...	0.48
European ‡	4431		...	0.77
Global Focus ‡	3721		...	...
Global High Income Bond A Dis ‡	22.39		...	6.38
Global Special Sits ‡	8963		...	...
Japan ‡	981.5		...	0.34
Moneyblder Bal ‡	48.84		...	3.53
Moneyblder Inc ‡	28.21		...	5.03
Moneyblder UK Ind ‡	202.4		...	2.47
Special Sits ‡	7546		...	1.64

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Opportunities Fund A Dis ‡	106.4		...	1.69

HALIFAX INVESTMENT FUND MGRS
01296 386 386

Authorised Inv Funds

Share Class C

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corporate Bond ‡	37.28		...	4.70
Intl Gwth ‡	216.7		...	0.60
UK FTSE 100 IT ‡	108.7		...	...
UK FTSE All-S IT ‡	120.9		...	...

HSBC GLOBAL ASSET MGMT (UK)
Enq:0845 745 6123 Dlg:0845 745 6126 Mon-Frid:8-6

HSBC Index Tracker Investment Funds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Ind Acc ‡	1626		...	0.78
Euro Ind Acc ‡	1859		...	2.29
Euro Ind Inc ‡	1077		...	2.33
FTSE 100 Ind Acc ‡	441.2		...	2.50
FTSE 100 Ind Inc ‡	179.2		...	2.64
FTSE 250 Ind Acc ‡	415.2		...	2.83
FTSE 250 Ind Inc ‡	225.1		...	2.82
FTSE All-S Acc ‡	1113		...	2.65
FTSE FTSE All-S Inc ‡	500.4		...	2.79
Japan Ind Acc ‡	235.4		...	1.44
Japan Ind Inc ‡	170.7		...	1.48
Pacific Ind Acc ‡	1085		...	1.52
Pacific Ind Inc ‡	613.9		...	1.54

HSBC Investment Funds (OEIC) Retail Share Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bd Acc ‡@	311.5		...	4.10
Income Acc ‡	1062		...	3.28
Monthly Inc Acc ‡@	313.4		...	3.75
Monthly Inc Inc ‡@	155.9		...	4.02
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Acc ‡@	223.2		...	3.01
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Inv ‡@	86.52		...	3.08

HSBC Specialist Investment Fds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American Index Retail Inc ‡	1252		...	0.76

INVESCO FUND MGRS LTD
Dling:0800 085 8571 Inv Serv:0800 085 8677

Brkr Serv:0800 028 2121

Invesco Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond ‡	231.13		...	4.08
High Income Dis ‡	434.45		...	3.14
Income & Growth Dis ‡	505.84		...	3.09
Income Inc ‡	1680.68		...	2.84
Money Acc ‡	108.05		...	3.64
Monthly Inc Plus Dis ‡	92.38		...	5.73
UK Opps UK Acc ‡	1394.36		...	1.47
UK Sml Cos Eqty Acc ‡	1367.59		...	1.20

INVESTEC FUND MGRS LTD
Broker Support and Dealing: 020 7597 1900

OEIC Series I, ii,iii & iv

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American A Acc ‡	877.22		...	...
Cautious Managed A Acc ‡	472.45		...	2.63
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡	270.82		...	2.51
Diversified Growth A Acc ‡	333.46		...	0.21
Diversified Growth Inc ‡	122.7		...	0.96
Diversified Income A Acc ‡	376.79		...	3.89
Diversified Income A Inc ‡	67.85		...	5.29
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Ac ‡	144.55		...	5.77
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Inc ‡	66.96		...	7.46
Emerging Mkts Equity A Ac ‡	294.07		...	0.04
Emerging Mkts Leaders A Acc ‡	1249.99		...	...
Global Equity A Acc ‡	303.77		...	...
Global Franchise A Acc ‡	406.33		...	...
Global Free Enterprise A Acc ‡	2123.93		...	...
Global Gold A Acc ‡	644.48		...	...
Global Special Situations A Acc ‡	539.5		...	...
Global Special Situations A Inc ‡	413.89		...	...

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Special Situations A Acc ‡	2738.31		...	1.03
UK Special Situations A Inc ‡	941.73		...	1.04

For ISIS Asset Mgmt see F&C Fd Mgmt Ltd (OEIC)

JANUS HENDERSON INVESTORS
Investor Serv: 0800 832 831 Dlng:0845 946 4646

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
All Stcks Credit A Inc ‡	113.5		...	4.50
Asian Div Inc U Trust Inc ‡	100.7		...	5.60
Cautious Managed Fd A Acc ‡	357.8		...	3.80
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡	153.5		...	3.90
China Opp Fund A Acc ‡	1301		...	0.10
Emg Mkts Opps Fd A Acc ‡	306.1		...	...
Erpn Sel Opps Fd A Acc ‡	3252		...	0.20
Fix IntMnthly Inc Fd Acc ‡	33.19		...	5.90
Global Equity Fund Acc ‡	6550		...	...
Global Equity Income A Ac ‡	88.35		...	2.30
Global Tech A Acc ‡	6990		...	...
Instl UK idx Opps A Acc ‡	179.1425		...	2.10
M-Asset Abs Rtn A Acc ‡	189.1		...	2.70
M-Man Active Fd A Acc ‡	338.6		...	1.80
M-Man Inc Grth A Inc ‡	162		...	2.80
M-Man Inc Fd Grth A Acc ‡	233.3		...	2.70
Sterling Bond U Trst Acc ‡	229.3		...	4.30
Sterling Bond U Trst Inc ‡	55.4		...	4.30
Strategic Bond A Inc ‡	95.6		...	5.70
UK Abs Ret Fd A Acc ‡	207.5		...	2.10
UK Alpha Fund A Acc ‡	201		...	1.20
US Growth Fund A Acc ‡	3012		...	...

J.P. MORGAN ASSET MANAGEMENT
OEIC

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Equity Core E Net Acc ‡@	710.9000		...	2.52

JUPITER UT TRUST MANAGERS LTD
020 7581 3020

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Distribution & Growth ‡	125.69		...	2.93
Euro Special Sits ‡	600.5		...	0.71
European ‡	3996.45		...	0.61
Financial Opps ‡	1347.96		...	1.01
Global Macro Bd L GBP ACC ‡	427.06		...	3.87
Merlin Bal Acc ‡	349.01		...	2.26
Merlin Growth Acc ‡	837.54		...	0.20

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Merlin Inc Acc ‡@	472.15		...	3.40
Merlin Wwide Inc ‡	611.71		...	...
UK Dynamic Equity L Dis ‡	292.36		...	1.75
UK Growth ‡	285.62		...	0.64
UK Income Trust ‡	1019.73		...	4.58

LEGAL & GENERAL (UT MANGRS) LTD
Enquiries: 0870 050 0955 Dealing: 0870 050 0956

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Ind Acc ‡@	813.6		...	1.90
Euro Ind Inc ‡	485.8		...	1.90
Fixed Int Acc ‡	150.1		...	4.60
Fixed Int Dist ‡	62.03		...	4.60
Global Health ‡	125.8		...	0.90
Glob Tech Acc ‡@	238.5		...	...
High Inc Acc ‡@	154.7		...	5.70
Japan Ind Acc ‡	112.8		...	1.30
Pacific Ind Acc ‡	429.6		...	1.30
UK Index Trust Acc ‡	540		...	2.50
Uk Index Trust Dist ‡	233.8		...	2.50
US Ind Acc ‡	1419		...	0.50
Worldwide Acc ‡	471.5		...	0.90

M&G SECURITIES
Enq:0800 390 390 Dealing Line: 0800 328 3196

Authorised Inv Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Charifund Inc ‡	1911.03		...	5.10

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 2

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Extra Income Inc ‡	827.55		...	5.09
Gilt & Fxd Int Inc ‡	66.85		...	4.79
Gl Hi Yd Bd Inc ‡	39.93		...	6.26
Index Linked Bd Inc ‡	101.53		...	1.57
Index Trckr Inc ‡	104.9		...	2.99
Short Dated Corp Bd Inc ‡	25.36		...	4.28
UK Select A Inc ‡	3344.62		...	2.61

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 3

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bd A Inc ‡	32.72		...	5.09
Dividend Inc ‡	66.54		...	5.37
Recovery A Inc ‡	143.11		...	2.85
Sml Cos Inc ‡	368.11		...	2.78

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 4

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Episode Allocation A Inc ‡	161.53		...	3.80

MARKS & SPENCER UNIT TRUST
0808 005 5555

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
High Income ‡	87.32		...	4.60
High Income Acc ‡	298		...	4.60
UK 100 Comp Acc ‡	719		...	3.10
UK 100 Comp Inc ‡	323.5		...	3.10
UK Select Port ‡	478.9		...	2.90
UK Select Port Acc ‡	1095.5		...	2.90
W'wide Mgd Acc ‡@	1337		...	0.20
Worldwide Mgd Acc ‡@	744.4		...	0.20

MORGAN STANLEY INVESTMENT MGMT
Enquiries: 0800 0961 962

The Morgan Stanley Funds (UK)

Class A Shares

Equity

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Glob Bal Inc F F Acc ‡	1049.40		...	1.54
Glob Bal Inc F F Inc ‡	938.65		...	1.55
Glob Bal Inc F I Inc ‡	936.69		...	1.49
Glob Bal Inc F I Acc ‡	1046.53		...	1.47
Glob Bal Sust F F Acc ‡	1036.68		...	1.65
Glob Bal Sust F F Inc ‡	989.88		...	1.66
Glob Bal Sust F I Acc ‡	1034.12		...	1.57
Glob Bal Sust F I Inc ‡	989.45		...	1.60
Glob Br Eq Fund F Inc ‡	1125.23		...	4.24
Glob Br Eq Fund I Acc ‡	1772.4		...	4.21
Glob Br Eq Fund I Inc ‡	1189.42		...	4.33
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	14384.24		...	0.32
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡	1671.2		...	0.45
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	1781.33		...	0.45
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡	3868.89		...	0.32
Glob Quality Fund F Acc (PH) ‡	1566.75		...	0.49
Glob Quality Fund F Inc ‡	1522.36		...	0.51
Glob Quality Fund I Acc ‡	1564.37		...	0.34
Glob Quality Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	1561.23		...	0.34
Glob Quality Fund F Acc ‡	1581		...	0.51
Stg Corp Bond F F Acc ‡	144.38		...	4.89
Stg Corp Bond F F Inc ‡	97.91		...	4.91
Stg Corp Bond F I Inc ‡	1378.69		...	4.74
Stg Corp Bond F I Acc ‡	3054.19		...	4.74
US Adv F F Acc ‡	2523.59		...	...
US Adv F F Acc (PH) ‡	1525.68		...	...
US Adv F I Acc ‡	2656.71		...	...
US Adv F I Acc (PH) ‡	1579.5		...	...

SANTANDER UNIT TST MGRS
08457 413002

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Equity Inc Inc ‡	236.7		...	...
Stkmkt 100 Tkr ‡	230.8000		...	...
UK Growth I Acc ‡	657.4		...	...
UK Growth Inc ‡	315.6		...	...

SCOTTISH MUTUAL INV MNGRES LTD
0141 248 6100

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Far Eastern Inc	617.0700	649.4700	...	...
Mutual Far Eastern	1385.9200	1462.7100	...	0.39
Mutual UK Eq	1429.4900	1508.7000	...	7.81
UK Equity Inc	562.2300	593.3800	...	7.81

SCOTTISH WIDOWS UNIT TRUST MNGRS
0845 300 2244

Overseas Growth Investment Funds

Tracker & Special Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr A Acc ‡	605.0		...	2.50
UK Trkr A Inc ‡	275.3		...	2.50

UK & Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond A Acc ‡@	328.8		...	4.20
Corp Bond A Inc ‡@	107.8		...	4.20
Envir Invtr A Acc ‡	469.5		...	2.10
Hi Inc Bond A Ac ‡@	299.5		...	6.40
Hi Inc Bond A Inc ‡@	70.58		...	6.40
Hi Res A Acc ‡	562.0		...	3.70
Hi Res A Inc ‡	152.1		...	3.80
Strat In A Acc ‡@	228.8		...	4.60
Strat In A Inc ‡@	86.18		...	4.60
UK Eq Trckr A ‡	136.5		...	2.50

OEIC B Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr B Acc ‡	670.3		...	2.60
UK Trkr B Inc ‡	273.8		...	2.60

OEIC C Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Eq Tkr C ‡	133.3		...	2.60

STANDARD LIFE INVESTMENTS
0845 279 3003

Investment Funds (OEIC)-Retail Shares

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
AAA Inc CAT Acc ‡	98.41		...	2.52
AAA Inc CAT Inc ‡	51.08		...	2.52
AAA Income Acc ‡	108.50		...	...
Amer Eq Gth Acc ‡	285.40		...	...
Glb Advtg CAT Acc ‡	203.4		...	1.32
Glob Advtg Acc ‡	268.10		...	...
Higher Inc Acc ‡	186.50		...	...
Higher Inc Inc ‡	48.25		...	...
Managed Acc ‡	519.1		...	1.83
UK Ethical Acc ‡	261.90		...	...
UK Smlr Cos Acc ‡	826.30		...	...

SVS BROWN SHIPLEY FUNDS
Enquiries:0141 222 1151

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Balanced A Acc ‡	187.19		...	2.02
Blanced A Inc ‡	158.42		...	2.07
Cautious A Acc ‡	133.44		...	2.44
Cautious A Inc ‡	105.54		...	2.48
Dynamic A Acc ‡	500.23		...	1.40
Dynamic A Inc ‡	437.67		...	1.41
Growth A Acc ‡	494.49		...	1.63
Income A Acc ‡	320.06		...	2.17

THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS
Client Serv: 0800 0684000

Retail Shares Class 1

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Threadneedle HY Bd Rtl Inc ‡	39.4098		...	...
Threadneedle Mnthly Etr Inc Inc ‡	101.4317		...	...
Threadneedle SterlingCorp Bd Inc ‡	54.797		...	...
Threadneedle SterlingCorp Acc ‡	54.6859		...	...
Threadneedle Stg Bd Ret Inc ‡	39.4837		...	...
Threadneedle Strat Bd Ret ‡	41.7311		...	...
Threadneedle UK Eq Inc Rtl Inc ‡	119.95		...	...
Threadneedle UK Growth & inc Rtl Inc ‡	112.3827		...	...
Threadneedle UK Istl Rtl ‡	250.6859		...	...
Threadneedle UK Mnthly Inc Rtl Inc ‡	89.6848		...	...
Threadneedle UK Rtl Inc ‡	167.8669		...	...
Theadneedle U Smaller Coms Rtl Inc ‡	410.359		...	...

For Resolution see Ignis

TU FUND MANAGERS LTD

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
IFSL Marlborough Eur A Dis	1013		...	1.21

* Yield expressed as CAR (Compound Annual Return); † Ex dividend; ‡Middle price; . . . No significant data. # Periodic charge deducted from capital; @ Exit charge

British funds

Index-Linked

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/-	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
73.08	63.68	Tr IL 0 ½% 50	64.12	-.05	0.78	2.53
66.33	56.73	Tr IL 0 ¼% 52	57.27	+.02	0.44	2.53
101.91	97.20	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 28	99.57	+.01	0.13	0.35
100.99	97.50	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 29	98.51	+.01	0.13	0.71
98.88	94.73	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 31	95.96	- ...	0.13	0.96
88.33	82.97	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 36	83.75	-.08	0.15	1.88
82.85	76.16	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 39	77.65	+ nc	0.16	2.17
79.32	72.11	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 41	72.96	-.03	0.17	2.27
74.05	65.19	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 44	67.16	+.03	0.19	2.43
71.23	62.80	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 46	63.50	-.07	0.20	2.49
68.00	59.19	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 48	59.84	-.10	0.21	2.52
60.61	49.87	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 56	50.54	-.10	0.25	2.45
58.90	48.59	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 58	49.42	-.06	0.25	2.43
54.25	43.57	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 65	44.18	-.17	0.28	2.29
53.89	40.40	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 68	43.10	-.17	0.29	2.23
57.66	42.98	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 73	44.42	-.09	0.28	1.95
97.88	93.36	Tr IL 0 ¾% 34	94.15	+ ...	0.80	1.57
79.12	70.87	Tr IL 0 ¾% 47	71.55	-.09	1.05	2.48
62.70	49.79	Tr IL 0 ⅜% 62	52.19	-.07	0.72	2.37
87.38	80.77	Tr IL 0 ⅝% 40	81.36	+.03	0.77	2.23
84.28	76.40	Tr IL 0 ⅝% 42	77.02	-.07	0.81	2.33
104.16	100.95	Tr IL 1 ¼% 27	101.40	+.01	1.23	0.10
103.67	99.28	Tr IL 1 ¼% 32	100.01	+.01	1.25	1.25
86.56	72.33	Tr IL 1 ¼% 54	74.72	-.02	1.67	2.50
85.60	73.36	Tr IL 1 ¼% 55	74.27	-.07	1.68	2.50
99.52	94.19	Tr IL 1 ⅛% 35	94.86	-.09	1.19	1.74
97.09	90.76	Tr IL 1 ⅛% 37	91.44	+.02	1.23	1.98
102.53	95.86	Tr IL 1 ¾% 38	96.65	-.12	1.81	2.07
99.42	88.49	Tr IL 1 ⅞% 49	89.28	-.17	2.10	2.49
248.27	236.46	Tr IL 2% 35	242.01	-.12	0.83	1.75
349.35	338.55	Tr IL 4 ⅛% 30	341.94	+.03	1.21	0.96

Longs (Over 15 Years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/-	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
26.99	21.99	Tr 0 ½% 61	22.52	-.02	2.22	5.51
65.04	55.40	Tr 0 ⅛% 51	56.18	-.04	0.22	2.53
38.39	32.78	Tr 0 ⅝% 50	33.40	+ nc	1.87	5.77
47.60	40.99	Tr 1 ½% 53	41.55	-.01	3.61	5.83
45.88	39.62	Tr 1 ¼% 51	40.23	+.02	3.11	5.83
33.04	27.34	Tr 1 ⅛% 73	27.64	-.03	4.07	5.34
48.44	41.83	Tr 1 ¾% 57	42.25	-.01	4.14	5.78
48.36	41.73	Tr 1 ⅝% 54	42.39	-.02	3.83	5.80
41.45	35.52	Tr 1 ⅝% 71	35.85	-.01	4.53	5.47
57.14	49.72	Tr 2 ½% 65	50.28	-.02	4.97	5.69
74.02	64.55	Tr 3 ½% 68	65.36	-.02	5.35	5.67
81.50	72.00	Tr 3 ¾% 52	72.97	+.01	5.14	5.77
80.90	71.30	Tr 3 ¾% 53	72.13	+ nc	5.20	5.80
88.15	77.58	Tr 4 ¼% 55	78.54	+.03	5.41	5.78
83.52	73.28	Tr 4% 60	74.09	+ nc	5.40	5.75

Mediums (5-15 Years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/-	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
83.19	79.47	Tr 0 ¼% 31	81.30	+ ...	0.31	4.54
86.27	82.79	Tr 0 ⅜% 30	84.59	-.01	0.44	4.50
72.25	67.14	Tr 0 ⅝% 35	68.67	+ ...	0.91	5.03
79.97	75.46	Tr 0 ⅞% 33	76.90	+.01	1.14	4.85
48.97	42.75	Tr 0 ⅞% 46	43.57	+.02	2.01	5.73
54.44	47.82	Tr 1 ½% 47	48.58	-.03	3.09	5.77
61.88	55.55	Tr 1 ¼% 41	56.76	+ nc	2.20	5.49
66.75	60.85	Tr 1 ⅛% 39	62.14	+ nc	1.81	5.33
75.83	69.99	Tr 1 ¾% 37	71.13	+.01	2.46	5.23
55.77	49.19	Tr 1 ¾% 49	49.80	-.01	3.51	5.77
85.07	81.01	Tr 1% 32	82.54	+.01	1.21	4.69
82.54	74.42	Tr 3 ½% 45	75.33	+.02	4.65	5.68
95.49	90.74	Tr 3 ¼% 33	91.59	-.01	3.55	4.79
80.41	72.57	Tr 3 ¼% 44	73.57	+.02	4.42	5.66
100.00	85.76	Tr 3 ¾% 38	86.95	+.01	4.31	5.29
102.40	96.34	Tr 4 ½% 34	97.24	+.01	4.63	4.92
101.93	0.01	Tr 4 ½% 35	96.58	+ ...	4.66	5.00
96.45	87.54	Tr 4 ½% 42	88.67	+.01	5.08	5.57
102.33	0.01	Tr 4 ¼% 32	97.88	+ ...	4.34	4.67
100.56	94.70	Tr 4 ¼% 34	95.59	+.01	4.45	4.93
99.39	92.65	Tr 4 ¼% 36	93.73	+ nc	4.53	5.09
100.00	88.42	Tr 4 ¼% 39	89.55	+.01	4.75	5.38
100.00	86.92	Tr 4 ¼% 40	88.18	+ nc	4.82	5.45
90.97	81.54	Tr 4 ¼% 46	82.67	+.02	5.14	5.70
89.58	79.95	Tr 4 ¼% 49	80.99	+.04	5.25	5.74
101.49	97.47	Tr 4 ⅛% 31	98.03	- ...	4.21	4.61
100.70	95.57	Tr 4 ⅛% 33	96.27	- ...	4.28	4.80
104.72	100.54	Tr 4 ¾% 30	100.87	-.01	4.71	4.52
103.33	96.78	Tr 4 ¾% 35	97.74	-.01	4.86	5.06
102.00	93.84	Tr 4 ¾% 38	94.94	+.01	5.00	5.32
102.58	98.98	Tr 4 ⅜% 30	99.42	- ...	4.40	4.56
97.07	89.07	Tr 4 ⅜% 40	90.11	+.01	4.86	5.42
100.37	99.68	Tr 4 ⅝% 32	99.63	-.01	4.64	4.70
100.00	94.52	Tr 4 ⅝% 37	95.43	+ nc	4.85	5.19
100.99	96.96	Tr 4 ⅞% 36	97.98	+.01	4.98	5.14
105.68	96.52	Tr 5 ¼% 41	97.76	-.02	5.37	5.48
105.44	93.20	Tr 5 ⅜% 56	94.30	-.04	5.70	5.78

Shorts (Under 5 Years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/-	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
91.87	89.09	Tr 0 ½% 29	91.20	+.01	0.55	4.38
98.67	91.49	Tr 0 ⅛% 28	94.59	+ ...	0.13	4.10
99.56	96.26	Tr 0 ⅜% 26	99.54	+ ...	0.38	3.67
91.00	0.01	Tr 0 ⅞% 29	89.59	+ ...	0.98	4.46
97.51	95.36	Tr 1 ¼% 27	97.44	+ ...	1.28	4.25
95.46	92.89	Tr 1 ⅝% 28	94.45	+.01	1.72	4.37
101.17	98.03	Tr 4% 29	98.69	+ ...	4.05	4.51
101.39	99.44	Tr 4 ¼% 27	99.94	+.01	4.25	4.30
101.88	98.28	Tr 4 ⅛ % 29	98.96	+.01	4.17	4.51
100.70	99.60	Tr 4 ⅛% 27	100.02	- ...	4.12	4.03
101.65	99.40	Tr 4 ⅜% 28	99.97	+.01	4.38	4.40
107.15	103.38	Tr 6% 28	103.56	-.01	5.79	4.33

* maturities having an eight-month indexation lag.

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Business

EQUITY PRICES

Dividend yields Please note dividend yields are supplied by ICE Data Services. The yield is the sum of a company's annual 12-month dividend payments divided by the last day's closing share price.
12-month high and low High/low prices for UK equities and investment trusts are based on intra-day figures.

Automobiles & Part

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
86¾	33	Aston Martin Lag	33½		...	-0.7

Banking & Finance

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
265	177½	**Aberdeen Group**‡	252¼		5.8	11.7
1¼	0⅝	Acuity RM♦	0¾		...	-3.5
4128	2624	**Admiral**	4024		3.6	16.3
662½	414⅜	AJ Bell	614		2.4	23.9
28761⅛	22372¾	AON Corp	24283¾	-1957¼	1.0	...
1100	765	Arbuthnot♦‡	795		6.9	7.3
276½	145⅞	Ashmore Group	224⅜		7.5	18.4
2126½	1590½	Australia & NZ	1966⅜	+22⅛	5.8	19.1
740⅝	590⅝	**Aviva**	730⅜		5.5	27.2
1122	690	Banco Santander	1082		1.5	13.9
554⅛	352⅞	**Barclays**‡	496⅝		2.3	11.3
17	4	Blue Star Capital♦	5¼		...	-2.7
710	613	BP Marsh & Ptnrs♦	680		5.3	5.1
351¾	212	Bridgepoint Grp	322⅝		2.9	64.5
376	264⅝	Chesnara	376		6.1	-74.5
496	349	City of London Grp	491		6.7	16.6
556⅛	318⅜	Close Bros	412⅝		...	-6.2
753	203	CMC Markets	732		1.9	26.6
2998	2057	Deutsche Bank	2964⅜	-12¾	2.9	10.9
93	73¾	EFG-Hermes Hldgs	73¾	+⅛	0.9	...
240¼	136	EPE Special Opps♦	211		...	8.7
85	52	Fiske♦	67½		1.7	5.9
92	80	Foresight Ventures VCT	83		4.3	15.5
4700	2230	Georgia Capital	4400		...	2.7
57	43¼	Hansard Global	53		8.4	40.8
230	194	Helios U/W♦	227½		4.4	7.8
1904	1257⅛	**Hiscox**‡	1842		2.1	13.8
1610	942¾	**HSBC**‡	1528⅜		3.6	17.1
1956	1016	**IG Group**‡	1400		3.0	9.7
200	90⅞	Impax Asset Mgmt♦	113⅝		8.8	7.1
2340	1424⅞	**ICG**	2022		4.3	12.1
145¾	115⅝	Intl Public P'ship‡	140		6.3	-10.3
690	499⅜	**Investec**‡	663		5.8	8.6
78	60	Investment Co	77½		...	...
75	48	IP Group	72⅝		1.7	10.0
24	6	Jarvis Securities♦	7		50.0	2.2
214½	113⅜	Jupiter Fund Mgmt‡	170¼		3.5	8.9
700	549	Lancashire Hldgs‡	616		2.7	6.9
318⅛	217¼	**Legal & General**‡	293⅜		7.5	29.4
13620	6905	**Lion Finance Group**	13420		2.4	9.4
365	223	Liontrust Asset Mgmt	317½		6.0	20.6
61	35	Livermore Invs Grp♦	37⅜		8.3	16.9
117⅞	77⅜	**Lloyds Banking**‡	110		3.6	15.7
22	14	LMS Capital	15⅝		25.6	...
10140	6684	**London Stock Exchange**‡	9000		1.8	37.8
367⅛	247	**M&G**	351		5.8	27.9
327¼	154¼	Man Group‡	309		4.1	27.2
39½	20	Manx Financial Grp♦	25		2.1	4.6
10	1¼	Marechale Capital♦	5		...	-6.1
186⅜	98¼	Metro Bank	173		...	22.2
2621¼	1864⅝	National Australia	2041⅞	+15⅛	4.4	17.5
726	500¼	**NatWest Group**‡	679⅜		5.2	12.7
833⅞	438⅜	PayPoint‡	632		6.3	10.7
1238	910¼	**Prudential**	1018		2.0	9.0
1¼	0⅜	Quantum Blockchain♦	0⅜		...	-1.8
209	150¾	Quilter‡	194⅛		3.3	21.8
2500	1580	Rathbones Group	1712		5.8	15.9
327	245	Rockwood Strategic	323		...	0.0
2458½	1620	S & U	2000		5.8	10.2
3	0¼	Sancus Lending♦	1¼		...	8.1
59⅛	42¼	Schroder REIT‡	44		8.2	...
599½	358⅝	**Schroders**	584		3.8	17.1
1575½	1038¾	**St James's Place**‡	1186		1.5	11.9
2278	1351½	**Standard Chart'd**‡	2177		2.4	15.1
948½	615	**Standard Life**	940		5.9	-199.6
6347⅛	4284⅝	Sun Life Canada‡	5771⅝	-45¾	3.5	...
6¾	2¾	Tavistock Invs♦	3		3.4	2.5
5200	3615	TBC Bank Grp‡	5050		5.1	7.1
1¾	0¼	Tern♦	1⅛		...	-1.3
60	40⅛	Time Finance♦	57⅜		...	9.1
0⅜	0⅛	Tooru♦	0¼		...	-1.8
4	1½	Truetide♦	3¼		...	-5.8
132	75	Vanquis Banking Gp	80⅝		...	25.2
2800	2000	Volvere♦	2150		...	11.4
7239⅝	5453⅛	Wells Fargo‡	6389⅝	+3⅜	2.3	...
2275⅜	1755¾	Westpac Bkg Corp	1826¼	+31¾	4.5	17.2
31¾	23	Worsley Investors	28¼		...	...
57550	49947¼	Zurich Insurance	54096½	-109½	5.1	18.5

Construction & Property

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
357	181	Alumasc♦	227½		4.9	8.8
6⅝	4⅜	Aseana Properties	5⅛		...	1.3
2½	1¼	Built Cybernetics♦	1⅞		...	-190.0
973	579½	Balfour Beatty	884½		1.6	16.8
410¼	235⅜	**Barratt Redrow**	318¼		5.4	23.4
2890	1715	Bellway	2160		3.3	16.3
4442	2796	Berkeley	3570		...	10.8
1208	800½	Big Yellow Grp	877½		5.4	...
460	233	Billington Hldgs♦	410		2.7	39.4
237	133½	Boot (Henry)	146		5.4	8.3
383¾	271⅜	Breedon	355		4.3	14.7
451⅝	318⅝	**British Land**	426¼		5.4	...
2900	2500	Cardiff Property	2750		1.1	20.7
2196	1469⅜	Derwent London	2048		4.0	...
5½	4⅛	DCI Advisors♦	4¾		...	-2.8
19½	11	First Property♦‡	13½		1.9	7.5
75	29	Fletcher King♦	42½		5.3	28.7
62	31¾	Foxtons Group‡	38⅜		3.0	8.9
640	407½	Galliford Try Hldgs	608		3.3	18.0
391½	241	Genuit Group‡	276		4.7	15.2
435	221	Gleeson (MJ)	279		3.9	10.3
1062¾	788⅝	Grafton Grp Units	1041¾		3.6	14.8
202¾	149½	Grainger	173¾		4.8	6.3
377	270	Great Portland Est	337⅝		2.4	0.0
391¾	263⅜	Hammerson	377⅜		4.8	...
185	116¾	Harworth Group	176¾		1.0	61.0
400	215½	Heath (Samuel)♦‡	245		5.3	30.6
236¼	180⅝	Helical	200		1.3	41.4
143¾	82⅞	Ibstock‡	88¾		2.3	...
161½	112	James Halstead♦	136⅜		6.5	14.1
3518	1238	Keller‡	3020		2.7	14.9
8824½	8747⅜	Kingspan Group	8747⅜		0.6	27.6
726	522½	**Land Securities**	686½		6.0	...
216¼	175¼	**LondonMetric Prop**‡	189		6.6	...
24	4¼	Macau Prop Opp Fd	4¾		...	-0.3
184¼	124	Marshalls	166⅜		4.2	29.2
105	66	Michelmersh Brick♦	74½		6.2	18.5
1	0⅜	Mindflair♦	0⅜		...	-1.3
5730	3915	Morgan Sindall	4400		3.7	11.8
10200	8350	Mountview Estates	8750		6.0	16.8
85	65¾	NewRiver REIT	81¼		8.2	...
226	160	Palace Capital	189		7.9	42.0
320	261	Panther Securities♦	290		4.1	11.8
1552	947⅜	**Persimmon**	1178½		5.1	13.2
24	15	Plaza Centers	14½		...	-0.1
109⅝	87⅜	Primary Health Props	95½		7.6	...
33⅜	28	Real Estate Inv♦	31¼		4.8	-62.4
849½	554½	Safestore	588		5.2	...
1142	791½	Savills‡	1070		2.2	20.6
5½	0¼	Secure Prop Dev & Inv♦	0½		...	-0.1
997⅜	603	**Segro**‡	961¼		3.3	...
155⅛	124⅛	Shaftesbury Capital‡	147¼		2.9	7.9
11	6¾	SIG	9⅜		...	-1.7
153	105	SigmaRoc♦	126		...	17.3
113	86¾	Sirius Real Estate	98		5.6	7.5
140	106	Smart (J)	115		2.8	8.8
23¾	16	Steppe Cement♦	21½		...	19.3
116⅞	74⅛	Taylor Wimpey	85⅛		4.9	30.4
139	104	Town Centre	128		3.9	...
723½	493⅜	Travis Perkins	651½		1.8	-7.8
175	132¼	**Tritax Big Box**‡	157⅜		5.2	...
729½	442¼	Unite Group	510½		7.4	...
746⅜	220	Vistry Group	302⅝		...	7.2
434⅜	312	Workspace Group	378		6.9	...
930	730	Wynnstay Props♦	905		3.1	12.6

Consumer Goods

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
229	117⅜	AEP Plantations	205		3.0	12.0
30	17⅝	Airea♦	27		3.7	10.6
2359	1729½	**AB Foods**	2052		3.1	14.5
715⅜	589	Barr (AG)	596		3.1	14.1
5326	3677	**British Amer Tob**	4129		5.9	11.8
1376½	976	**Burberry Group**	1084		...	...
175	85⅜	C&C Group	95¾		5.1	...
5⅞	3	Capital Metals♦	4		...	-33.5
460	271	Churchill China♦	370		5.7	9.3
5195	3270	**Coca-Cola HBC**	4570		2.2	20.6
1515¾	821	Colefax♦	1440		0.4	10.2
5810	4775	Cranswick	5390		2.1	18.2
2071	1295½	**Diageo**	1709		2.2	29.7
0¼	0	Distil♦	0		...	-0.5
1918	1160	Evans (M.P.)♦	1798		3.3	11.1
149½	114½	Fevara	145		1.7	6.3
23540	14070	**Games Workshop**‡	18420		3.1	29.5
2185⅜	1147⅞	Glanbia‡	1905⅜	-12¼	2.0	35.3
307½	191⅛	Greencore	266¾		1.0	20.2
73¾	4⅝	Headlam	10½		...	-0.1
840	447⅞	Hilton Food	636		5.5	7.2
3632	2476	**Imperial Brands**‡	2527		6.6	10.1
7646⅜	5567¾	Kerry Group	7202⅞	-159½	1.7	21.0
214⅛	106¼	McBride	206		1.5	10.6
260	85	Mulberry Group♦	250		...	-19.2
1240	880	Nichols♦‡	1140		3.4	19.4
374	252	Norcros	326		3.5	...
388⅝	309	Origin Ents♦	382½		3.9	9.0
1	0¼	PACSCo♦	0¼		...	-0.0
138	47⅛	Portmeirion♦	53		...	-1.2
1½	0½	Provexis♦	1		...	-52.5
114	65⅛	PZ Cussons	103⅝		3.6	22.0
138	92	REA	111		...	-215.0
210	155	Tandem♦	180		1.7	11.6
320	220	The Character Grp♦	315		2.2	-46.7
10	5	Ukrproduct Grp♦	6¾		...	-15.7
5542⅛	3644	**Unilever**‡	4776		3.5	12.9
76½	19½	Victoria♦	57		...	-0.2

Engineering

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
59⅛	10	Assoc Brit Eng	20		...	-6.9
2180	1458	Avon Technologies‡	1854		1.0	72.0
1527	902⅜	**Babcock**‡	1056½		0.7	25.1
2360	1529	**BAE Systems**	2044		1.8	29.7
1500	500	Braime A N/V♦	1250		1.3	6.6
2490	1376	Braime Group♦	2350		0.7	12.5
550	350	Caffyns	500		2.0	-12.3
0½	0⅛	Cap XX Ld♦	0⅛		...	-3.4
340	202¼	Castings	308		6.0	17.7
27	12⅜	Checkit♦	20		...	-7.7
650¾	446½	Chemring Group‡	550½		1.5	30.9
55	28⅛	Chesterfield Spec Cyl♦	37½		...	-41.7
1538	881⅛	Cohort♦‡	1226		1.5	23.5
570	195	Dialight	554		...	...
15	5¾	Feedback♦	6⅞		...	-0.3
1270	463⅛	Gooch & Housego♦	1210		1.1	88.3
28500	9292⅝	Goodwin	18460		1.8	25.0
4902	3194	**Halma**	3632		0.7	36.8
3220	1994	Hill & Smith	2995		...	29.2
2¾	1¼	Image Scan♦	2⅝		...	-12.4
3166	2216	**IMI**‡	3112		1.1	25.0
6800	3480	Judges Sci.♦	4025		2.9	48.7
90	34	LPA♦	77½		...	-29.4
685	409⅞	**Melrose**‡	515¼		1.5	17.8
261	179¾	Morgan Advanced	241		5.1	32.1
405	200	Mpac♦	342½		...	-10.8
1800	1120	MS Intl♦‡	1695		1.5	25.1
3318	1682	Oxford Instruments	2840		0.8	33.6
2413⅜	1779⅛	Phillips Elec	1973⅛	+1½	3.7	-46.1
4⅛	1	PipeHawk♦	1⅞		...	-2.7
5490	3110	Renishaw	5105		1.5	44.3
1586	990	**Rolls-Royce**‡	1530¼		0.7	22.0
489¼	286⅜	Rotork‡	485		1.7	35.1
105	60	SDI Group♦	91		...	19.4
318⅛	161	Senior	294½		0.7	-288.7
2147⅝	2134½	SKF Group	2135¼		2.8	32.2
2754⅛	2088	**Smiths**	2612		1.8	30.5
215	135	Solid State♦	188½		1.5	26.2
250	170	Somero Enter♦	242½		3.1	17.3
8050	5950	**Spirax Group**	7110		2.4	32.1
7½	3½	Tanfield♦	4¼		...	-4.1
320	240	Thorpe FW♦	260		2.8	12.0
142¾	45	Transense Tech♦	45½		...	4.9
507½	350	Vesuvius	388⅝		6.1	18.4
710	325	Volex‡	624		0.8	24.0
3580	2254	**Weir**	2846		1.5	29.7
2060	843	XP Power	1786		...	-42.5

Health

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
284½	187	Advanced Medical♦	282		1.0	61.0
12⅛	5	Allergy Therapeutics♦	5¾		...	-6.8
8	0⅞	CelLBxHealth♦	1¼		...	-0.2
580	391⅛	Anpario♦	536		2.3	13.3
15732	9892	**AstraZeneca**‡	11970		2.0	24.6
3½	1⅝	Cambridge Nutri Sci♦	1⅞		...	2.6
259¼	193	**Convatec**‡	227⅞		2.5	35.9
34	20	Potter & Moore♦‡	22		2.5	7.2
116⅞	72	Eco Animal Health♦	98½		...	30.2
32	21¾	EKF Diagnostics♦	25¼		...	53.8
10½	0¼	Futura Medical♦	0⅜		...	-0.1
3228¾	1943	Genus	2348		1.4	80.1
2282	1440¼	**GSK**‡	1853½		3.8	13.1
0¼	0⅛	Gunsynd♦	0⅛		...	-2.1
416⅛	274⅜	**Haleon**‡	368¼		2.0	19.8
1865	1187	Hikma Pharma‡	1616		3.9	12.0
266	150½	Hutchmed China♦	181		...	4.6
19⅜	1¾	ImmuPharma♦	3½		...	-9.5
32	12¼	Inspiration Health♦	18½		...	-15.9
15	6¼	IXICO♦	7¾		...	-4.2
1	0⅜	Thalia Therapeutics♦	0⅝		...	-3.9
77⅝	53⅞	NIOX Group♦	68		2.3	40.2
131.50	96.03	Novartis	CHF123.26	-0.48	3.0	41.1
962	441½	Oxford Biomedica	524		...	-19.5
0¾	0¼	Physiomics♦	0½		...	-3.0
4⅜	1¼	Proteome Sciences♦	1½		...	-1.5
6522⅞	3664	**Reckitt Benck**‡	5132		4.2	11.0
29⅞	10⅜	RUA Life Sci♦	27½		...	-118.0
40	9½	Sareum Holdings♦	33½		...	-14.0
1441½	1046	**Smith & Neph**	1062½		2.8	20.0
256½	140¾	Spire Healthcare	235		0.6	57.3
14	5	Talisman Metals♦	7		...	2.0
0⅞	0⅛	ValiRx♦	0⅛		...	-0.3

Industrials

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
79⅞	58⅛	Accsys Tech♦	71⅜		...	31.2
4780½	3665⅛	BASF	4533⅛	+61¾	4.3	29.1
4606¾	2268½	Bayer	4174⅛	+3¼	0.2	-13.2
98⅛	73⅛	Coats Group	81¼		3.0	18.6
3520¼	2437	**Croda**‡	3459		3.2	77.9
540	230	Cropper (James)♦	520		...	16.9
195⅜	136	Elementis‡	174¼		1.9	-30.3
110	6¼	Hardide♦	91½		...	...
3775	2095	International Paper‡	2910		4.7	-7.3
3245¼	2224	Johnson Matthey	2276		4.5	-29.8
1058	660	Mondi‡	870¼		1.4	27.2
169⅞	110	Robinson♦	127½		4.7	9.4
1002	597	Swire Pacific	1002	+15⅜	3.8	49.1
11	5½	Symphony Enviro♦	7		...	-6.5
124	16¾	Synthomer	98⅜		...	-1.0
2858¼	2026⅝	Takeda Pharma	2662⅝	-10	3.5	-59.6
855	515	Victrex	841		7.1	26.3
430	320	Wynnstay♦	361		5.0	36.5
479⅞	318½	Zotefoams	445½		1.8	9.6

Leisure

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
451	231	Accesso Tech♦	302		...	14.6
260	160	Celtic♦	185		...	5.2
221⅝	164	Domino's Pizza‡	212⅜		5.4	14.1
915⅝	500⅜	**Entain**‡	513¼		3.9	-4.9
60¼	19¾	Evoke	44⅞		...	-0.4
52	29	Gaming Realms♦	29½		...	14.5
310	210	Heavitree♦	305		2.2	5.6
244	130	Heavitree A♦	195		3.4	3.6
175.70	115.99	**InterCont'l Hotels**‡	$162.65		1.2	33.1
301½	223½	Mitch & Butlers	281½		...	9.5
294½	129⅜	On The Beach	194⅜		2.1	35.3
144¼	86	Rank Group	103¼		3.4	16.1
219⅜	137¼	SSP	201		2.2	-21.6
0⅝	0¼	Bow Street Group♦	0⅜		...	-0.3
865	530½	Wetherspoon JD	851½		1.4	14.2
3302	2098	**Whitbread**	2459		3.9	19.9

Media

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
76⅛	51⅛	Aeorema Comms♦	64½		4.1	51.2
29	18	Altitude Group♦	23		...	-92.0
115	70¼	Arcontech Group♦	78½		5.1	11.1
828¾	418⅝	**Autotrader**‡	528		2.2	15.5
690	435	Bloomsbury Pub	643		2.5	19.4
3½		Caledonian Hldgs♦	1¼		...	-0.1
60	40	Catalyst Media♦	42½		...	23.1
0⅝	0⅛	Catenai♦	0⅛		...	-2.6
20	9	Ebiquity♦	9⅜		...	-0.9
776	262¼	Future	309⅜		5.5	4.9
154	60⅝	GlobalData	84		1.8	19.1
110	44	IG Design Group♦	97½		1.0	-0.8
1000	719	**Informa**‡	901⅜		2.5	...
87⅜	65¾	ITV	71		7.0	12.0
205	98½	ME Group	129¾		6.5	8.7
0⅛	0⅛	Mediazest♦	0⅛		...	13.8
27	12	Mission Group♦	21		...	-1.0
220¼	139¾	Mony Group‡	203⅝		6.2	13.3
2341⅜	1624⅜	News Corp A	2271	-12⅝	0.6	...
2615¼	1891½	News Corp B	2541⅝	-37⅜	0.6	...
439½	217	Next 15 Group♦	317½		4.8	-10.6
1337	874¾	**Pearson**‡	1233½		2.1	24.0
4½	3	Primorus Inv♦	3⅜		...	5.0
73¾	40⅛	Reach‡	42⅞		13.8	-1.0
59	40	React♦	40		...	-27.6
3575	1991	**Relx**‡	2672		2.6	23.7
753¼	391⅜	Rightmove	510¼		2.1	18.2
270	130	SpaceandPeople♦	135		...	6.2
129	95⅝	STV Group	112		...	-10.4
444	170½	System1 Group♦	335		1.8	32.2
5079⅝	5079⅝	21st Cent Fox A	5079⅝		0.8	...
3358½	3307	21st Cent Fox B	3358½		1.3	...
369	230	Wilmington	270		4.3	21.0
412⅝	218½	WPP	382⅝		3.9	7.6
71½	40	Zinc Media♦	56½		...	-5.5

Natural Resources

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
0⅛	0	ADM Energy#	0		...	1.2
17⅞	8⅛	H-Power♦	10¾		...	-4.5
89⅜	36¾	Afentra♦	73¼		...	-70.9
0	0	Arkadian Strat Metals♦	0		...	-0.9
0¼	0⅛	Alien Metals♦	0⅛		...	-15.0
2⅞	0⅞	Aminex	1⅝		...	-18.6
8924	3349⅞	Anglo Amer Plat	6295⅜	-472½	7.3	23.4
4321	2215	**Anglo Amer**‡	4269		0.7	-17.5
435	173⅛	Anglo Asian Mng♦	425		0.7	37.2
4475	2115	**Antofagasta**	4039		1.4	40.6
1¼	0⅜	Arc Minerals♦	0¾		...	-1.5
2⅜	1¼	Ariana Resources♦	1½		...	-150.0
0⅞	0¼	Arkle Resources♦	0¾		...	-10.2
2¼	0⅞	Asiamet Resources♦	1⅝		...	-13.6
1133	508	Atalaya Mine	1109		0.9	21.3
4¾	2½	Beacon Energy♦	3¼		...	-0.8
13	4	Beowulf Mining♦	10½		...	-3.1

PRICES

Major indices

New York	
Dow Jones	53,185.90 (-374.09)
Nasdaq	26,370.89 (-31.54)
S&P 500	7,686.14 (-25.62)
Tokyo	
Nikkei 225	66311.93 (-93.63)
Hong Kong	
Hang Seng	25566.99 (-17.80)
Amsterdam	
Amsterdam AEX	1105.77 (-6.51)
Sydney	
Australia AO	9271.40 (-22.90)
Frankfurt	
DAX	26258.11 (-311.88)
Singapore	
Singapore Straits	5755.36 (+55.43)
Brussels	
Brussels BEL20	5834.28 (-34.80)
Paris	
Paris CAC	8334.50 (-66.68)
Zurich	
Zurich SMI	14286.43 (-113.34)
Zurich DJ Euro Stoxx 50	6420.16 (-65.51)
London	
FTSE100	10824.26 (Market closed)
FTSE250	24938.79 (Closed)
FTSE350	5906.53 (Closed)
FTSE Eurotop 100	5021.59 (-39.23)
FTSE All Share	5842.37 (Closed)
FTSE Non Financials	6403.17 (Closed)
TechMark Focus	9629.89 (Closed)
US$	1.3558 (-0.0016)
Euro	1.1672 (-0.0009)
SDR	0.9898 (-0.0012)
CPI Jul (2015=100)	142.9
RPI Jul (1987=100)	419.1
RPIX Jul (1987=100)	412.2

London Financial Futures

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol	Open Int
Long Gilt	26-Sep				86.22	5698	9949
	26-Dec				86.14	248975	1271228
	27-Mar				86.12	0	1
3-Mth Sonia Index	26-Jun				96.2525	7695	391553
	26-Sep				96.16	96025	444086
	26-Dec				95.905	131692	603606
	27-Mar				95.71	88412	406936
3 Mth Sonia Index	27-Jun				95.61	89940	381854
	27-Sep				95.585	87956	262434
	27-Dec				95.605	81770	304509
3-Mth Euribor	26-Sep	97.38	97.385	97.37	97.375	85069	643813
	26-Dec	97.195	97.205	97.175	97.185	153926	966169
	27-Mar	97.05	97.06	97.015	97.025	145390	496712
	27-Jun	96.965	96.98	96.92	96.935	147585	524961
	27-Sep	96.94	96.955	96.89	96.905	125807	461564
3-Mth Saron Index	26-Jun	100.0475	100.0475	100.0475	100.0475	130	69191
	26-Sep	100.05	100.055	100.045	100.055	3330	68170
	26-Dec	100.005	100.01	99.995	100.01	5383	51682
	27-Mar	99.93	99.935	99.91	99.925	5478	40527
	27-Jun	99.835	99.835	99.795	99.815	4610	31040
	27-Sep	99.74	99.745	99.695	99.715	3110	28154
	27-Dec	99.66	99.66	99.605	99.63	2491	21710
FTSE100	26-Sep				10836	52021	474154
	26-Dec				10903.5	12	1477
FTSEurofirst 80	26-Sep				8824.2	0	
	26-Dec				8870.2	0	

Tradeweb

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Commodities

Natural gas $

2.922	+0.034

Light crude oil

85.63	+2.23

Crude oils ($/barrel FOB)

WTI NOV 26	83.98	2.15
WTI DEC 26	82.01	2.01
WTI JAN 27	80.1	1.81
WTI FEB 27	78.38	1.6
WTI MAR 27	76.98	1.45

Products

Fuel Oil	490.75	1.625
Euro Naphtha	762.458	7.233

ICE futures

Gasoil

Sep1344.5-1344	Jan1116.75-1116.25
Oct1281.75-1281.5	Feb1085.25-1084.5
Nov1216.5-1216.25	
Dec1157.75-1157.25	Volume: 197879

Brent

Nov90.55-90.54	Feb84.34-84.3
Dec88.4-88.38	82.86-82.82
Jan86.2-86.18	Volume: 458725

Cocoa

Sep	4773	Sep	4859
Dec	4859	Dec	4693
Mar	4983	Mar	4983
May	4980	May	4980
Jul	4953	Volume: 82442	

Robusta coffee

Sep	3492	May	3484
Nov	3529	Jul	3472
Jan	3518		
May	3484	Volume: 38283	

White sugar

Oct	514.4	Aug	516.2
Dec	520.3	Oct	510.3
May	523.3		
May	523.3	Volume: 80857	

London grain futures

Liffe wheat (close £/t)

Nov	215.75	May	221.25
Jan	217.25	Jul	223.25
Mar	219.25	Volume: 20857	

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
0½	0	Bezant Resources♦	0⅛		...	11,3
3592	1918	BHP Group	3543		3,6	24,8
14	7⅝	Border & Sthn Pet♦	12		...	-101,7
122½	7⅛	Bougainville	8½	+ ¼	...	-12,7
609¾	399½	**BP**‡	514½		4,8	...
0	0	Buccaneer Energy♦	0		...	-0,7
8¼	1¾	Cadence Minerals♦	5⅞		...	-11,2
5½	3	Cadogan Energy	3¼		...	-11,3
2900	1250	Caledonia Mining♦‡	1900		2,2	9,1
3¼	1¾	Caspian Sunrise#	1⅞		...	3,5
244	125¼	Cent Asia Metals♦	178		8,7	-5,7
2¼	1¾	Chariot Ltd♦	1¾		...	...
0	0	Clontarf Energy♦	0		...	-6,2
0½	0¾	Corcel♦	0⅝		...	-2,4
18½	8	Crism Therapeutics♦	11½		...	-2,3
300½	129¾	DRD Gold	206	– 10½	3,8	17,3
0½	0⅛	ECR Minerals♦	0⅛		...	-2,8
0½	0	Empyrean Energy♦	0		...	-0,4
5620	2496¼	**Endeavour**	4742		2,8	23,0
28	9¼	EnQuest	25⅛		3,2	...
6	2	Eurasia Mining♦	2¼		...	14,7
2¾	0⅝	Europa Oil & Gas♦	1¾		...	-9,0
87¼	27¼	Ferrexpo#	28⅛		...	-4,6
4472	1753	**Fresnillo**‡	3170		3,5	22,9
80	3	Galantas Gold♦	34½		...	-9,4
21½	2⅞	GCM Resources♦	14		...	-20,0
7¼	2½	Gem Diamonds	5½		...	-0,1
3½	1⅝	Getech♦	3¼		...	-7,9
707¼	281⅞	**Glencore**‡	595⅝		2,1	...
0½	0⅛	Geo Exploration#	0⅛		...	-4,3
4582½	2310¼	Gold Fields	3385½	– 135½	4,7	...
21	7	Goldplat♦‡	18¼		3,7	30,4
2	0⅝	Goldstone Res♦	0½		...	-0,7
800	255	Greatland Resources♦	669		...	9,8
353¾	176	Griffin Mining♦	290		...	32,5
235	160⅜	Gulf Keystone	192		4,0	37,3
858	266½	Hochschild	667½		1,0	23,2
553	300	Hunting	408½		2,5	21,1
0¼	0	Ironveld♦	0		...	-2,4
219¾	57⅜	ITM Power♦	105⅛		...	-14,2
5¼	2¼	Jubilee Metals♦	2½		...	-3,5
1¼	0⅝	Karel Diamond Res♦	0⅝		...	-3,9
2¼	0⅝	KEFI Gold and Copper♦	1¼		...	-11,1
325½	178¾	Kenmare Res	190		...	-0,7
5⅞	1¾	Landore Res♦	2⅛		...	-2,1
0¼	0⅛	Lansdowne Resources♦	0⅛		...	-1,3
4¾	2⅝	Lexington Gold♦	2¼		...	-28,2
19¼	10⅛	Metals Exploration♦	16½		...	21,2
0¾	0⅛	Nativo Resources♦	0¼		...	-0,2
4½	0½	Nostrum Oil & Gas	0¾		...	-0,0
0½	0¼	Oriole Resources♦	0⅜		...	-16,2
		Ormonde Mining			...	...
41	12½	Orosur Mining♦	16⅜		...	...
190¾	60½	Pan African Res	136¼		1,6	25,8
33¼	6¾	Pantheon Res♦	11¼		...	-40,2
27	12½	Parkmead Group♦	22½		...	3,3
21¾	5	Petra Diamonds	6¼		...	-0,2
1¼	0½	Petrel Resources♦	1		...	-4,4
1¾	0⅝	Petro Matad♦	1		...	-4,6
8½	2¼	Plexus Holdings♦	3¼		...	-1,4
938	678⅞	Porvair	834		0,8	21,2

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
5½	2⅛	Prospex Energy♦	3¼		...	-5,7
5	0⅞	Quadrise♦	1		...	-5,9
160	35	Reabold Resources♦	61½		...	-768,8
0	0	Red Rock Res♦	0		...	-0,3
10416¼	9502½	Rio Tinto Ltd‡	9240½	– 184½	3,7	17,6
9117	4528	**Rio Tinto**‡	7674		4,5	17,0
0½	0⅛	Rome Resources♦	0¼		...	-14,2
375	195	Serabi Gold♦	320		1,6	6,1
302¾	146	Serica Energy♦	255		6,3	-26,6
3758½	2553⅜	**Shell**‡	3344½		4,5	15,0
7	2¼	Shuka Minerals♦	3⅜		...	-2,5
13	1½	Sound Energy♦	1¾		...	-1,5
27	5½	Star Energy♦	22		...	-3,9
4½	0⅞	Sunda Energy♦	2⅜		...	-2,9
0	0	Sunrise Resources♦	0		...	-3,3
0		Synergia Energy♦	0		...	0,5
0¼	0	Tertiary Minerals♦	0¼		...	-7,0
0⅞	0½	Thor Energy♦	0½		...	-0,6
7066	4293½	Total Eng SE	6471	+ 78½	4,6	12,7
0	0	Tower Resources♦	0		...	-0,4
21¼	3½	Tullow Oil	20½		...	69,5
0	0	UK Oil & Gas♦	0		...	-0,2
13	2⅝	URU Metals♦	4		...	-2,7
9½	2⅛	Vast Resources♦	4¼		...	-0,7
9	1⅜	Westmount Energy♦	3¼		...	-8,6
1½	0½	Xtract Resources♦	1		...	-4,3
4¾	2¼	Zephyr Energy♦	3		...	-7,0

Professional & Support Services

5135	2980	4imprint‡	4480		4,0	15,0
615	464	Andrews Sykes♦	575		4,5	13,3
130	103½	BTG Consulting♦	109		4,2	20,6
2886	1981	**Bunzl**	2792		2,7	19,8
416	215	Capita	280½		...	-1,9
49¾	25	CEPS♦	40½		...	-11,5
165	90	Christie Group♦	162½		2,2	32,0
2581¼	2000	**Compass**	2260½	+ 2¼	2,2	27,8
87	64½	Croma Security♦	70		3,4	12,2
6740	4188	**DCC Energy**	6370		3,4	...
37	15	Diales Grp♦	36		4,2	27,7
7765	4970	**Diploma**	7330		0,9	53,2
840	505	DiscoverIE	813		1,6	26,9
115¼	78⅜	Essentra	108¾		1,9	...
3987	2203	**Experian**	3044		1,7	25,1
330	110	FIH Group♦	172½		27,1	3,8
850	588	Hargreaves Servs♦	850		4,7	9,1
5860	3519¾	**Intertek**	5845		2,8	26,8
250¼	163½	Int'l Workplace	190		0,5	...
172½	123⅛	Johnson Service	148¼		3,2	15,9
554	360	Journeo♦	505		...	20,8
263¾	178⅜	Kier Group	261¾		3,0	20,5
1170	910	Latham (J)♦	1070		3,4	11,6
3800	2100	London Security♦	3650		2,7	18,8
298	204	LSL Property Servs	278		4,1	16,7
99	59⅛	Macfarlane	77		4,8	19,3
184	64½	Maintel Holdings♦	68½		...	-5,8
28	15¼	Malvern Int'l♦	21½		...	-2,6
460	310	Mears Group	424½		4,3	7,6
260	101⅜	Michael Page‡	222		2,1	76,6
214	134⅜	Mitie Group	208⅜		2,2	31,6
15¾	0⅛	MobilityOne#	6¾		...	-2,1
137	71⅜	Newmark Security♦	108½		...	15,4
260	170	Norman Broadbent♦	204		...	6,4
158	84⅜	Northern Bear♦‡	117½		6,4	3,9
187½	110	NWF Group♦	153		5,7	8,2

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
66	42	PCI-PAL♦	62½		...	...
12½	7	Petards♦	10		...	-14,9
12⅞	7	PHSC♦	7¾		...	-2,6
0¾	0½	PowerHouse Energy♦	0¼		...	-3,0
62¾	41½	Record	43		8,4	11,0
984¼	772	Renew Holdings♦	977		2,1	15,8
507	329½	**Rentokil**‡	345¾		2,7	25,2
310	222	Restore♦	293		2,5	-62,3
7	1½	River Global A♦	2½		...	-0,3
30	14	Roebuck Food Group♦	26		...	-9,0
760½	536⅜	RS Group	756½		3,0	21,9
150	85	RTC Group♦	95		7,1	6,7
125⅞	68	RWS Holdings♦	125⅜		5,1	-4,6
612	520	Science Group♦	578		1,7	7,7
325¾	212½	Serco‡	259		1,8	18,0
79⅜	54½	Smiths News	69⅝		8,0	5,9
27	13½	Software Circle♦	15½		...	-73,8
52½	36⅝	Stafflline Group♦	43		...	11,0
301	132½	SThree	301		4,8	22,0
350	146	Synectics♦	197½		2,5	9,0
2	0½	Thruvision Group♦	1¾		...	-1,7
74	46	Tribal♦	62		2,1	14,8
79¼	58	Vianet♦	65½		3,7	45,8
490	294½	ZIGUP‡	441½		6,1	13,1

Retailing

117⅞	82½	AO World	94¾		...	14,9
269¼	140	B&M European	237⅜		4,0	14,6
115¾	58¼	Card Factory	76⅛		6,6	8,5
1648	1062	CVS Group	1322		0,6	17,9
204	113	DFS Furniture	165		0,6	15,7
1246	707	Dunelm	870		8,0	11,3
845	598	Frasers Group	832½		...	9,6
2046	1407¼	Greggs	1854		3,7	15,4
276½	123¾	Halfords‡	273½		3,3	18,0
981	713	**Howden Joinery**	794		2,8	16,1
895	640½	Inchcape‡	849½		4,0	11,7
1⅜	0⅛	Imaging Biometrics	0¾		...	-4,3
106½	64	**JD Sports**	86¾		1,4	10,0
372¼	240½	**Kingfisher**	315½		3,9	22,5
418¾	301⅜	**Marks & Spencer**	394¾		1,1	31,1
3⅞	0⅜	Mothercare♦	0⅞		...	-0,9
93	61⅜	Naked Wines♦	67¾		...	-7,3
15900	11200	**Next**	15575		1,7	20,5
341¼	140½	Ocado	239¾		...	5,1
240¾	167½	Pets at Home	218¾		3,4	15,8
575	200	Pinewood Tech Group	452		...	94,2
747	192½	Saga	679		...	...
380¼	292½	**Sainsbury's**	333¾		4,1	19,3
714	378⅜	WH Smith	412¾		...	-3,7
14	4½	Sosandar♦	13¼		...	94,6
510⅜	411¼	**Tesco**	457¼		3,2	16,6
50	30½	Topps Tiles	36		8,6	11,8

Technology

252	140½	Alfa Financial	167⅝		5,7	16,4
307	195	Aptitude Software	215		2,5	29,5
129	55	Bango♦	64½		...	-8,9
20	11⅝	BATM Adv Coms	11⅞		...	-3,8
33	19⅜	Berkeley Res	26		...	-25,2
3¼	0⅝	Blackbird♦	1¼		...	-1,8
194	74	Cellebrus Tech♦	95		3,6	-106,4
28	12½	Cirata♦	12¾		...	-2,9
0⅝	0⅛	CloudCoCo♦	0⅛		...	0,4
5685	2234	**Computacenter**	5670		1,3	38,7
286	173½	Concurrent Tech♦	260		0,4	44,4
13½	6½	Corero♦	7¼		...	-98,3
2644	988	Craneware♦	1394		2,4	33,6
110	50	Crimson Tide♦	90		...	21,4
10	5⅛	CyanConnode Hldgs♦	10		...	-8,5
15½	8	Dillistone Group♦	11½		...	-7,9

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
0½	0	Forgent♦	0		...	-0,0
165½	94½	FDM Group	111⅜		6,3	21,4
480	114	Filtronic♦	235½		...	...
265	151½	GB Group	162¼		2,7	-5,3
51	24	Iliko♦	27		...	-6,7
138	56	Ingenta♦	65½		6,9	5,5
178	73	Intercede♦	111		...	19,5
28½	11½	Iomart♦	14¼		...	-1,8
72⅞	4½	IQE♦	48¼		...	-12,8
4453½	912⅝	LG Electronics	1814⅜	+ 2¼	1,4	...
79	37	MTI Wireless♦	67½		3,0	15,6
13½	2	Nanoco Group	2¾		...	-2,3
138	94½	Netcall♦	115½		0,8	47,1
36	22	Northamber♦	25		2,4	-1,7
60⅝	37½	Oxford Metrics♦	39		8,3	-70,9
31	17	Pennant Intl♦	29		...	-5,8
447	210	Playtech	406⅜		...	1,0
50	23	Pulsar Group♦	24		...	-3,1
576½	398½	QinetiQ	507½		2,2	25,2
117	88	RM	103		...	39,6
6½	2½	Seeing Machines♦	4¾		...	-11,4
66	35½	Shearwater Group♦	58½		...	-1,5
2134	1083	Softcat	2084		1,5	31,3
39½	5	Sorted Group#	9		...	-0,2
1018½	575½	Tele Ericsson	737½	– 1	3,1	11,2
1181	771⅝	**The Sage Grp**	1092		2,1	28,9
89½	52½	Touchstar♦	85		3,8	-6,4
435	280	Tracsis♦	340		0,8	...
430	236	Triad Group	410		2,2	41,3
360	210	Water Intel♦	345		...	16,3
150	96½	Xaar	118		...	-27,4
19	8½	Zoo Digital♦	17⅝		...	-6,3

Telecoms

436¼	212½	**Airtel Africa**	332⅝		1,6	24,3
242⅜	173	**BT Group**‡	205¼		4,1	18,7
169½	106	Currys‡	151⅞		2,0	9,8
1207	687	Gamma Comms	1140		1,9	16,4
247½	127½	Helios Towers‡	202½		0,9	74,2
0⅜	0⅛	Gana Media♦	0⅛		...	-3,2
1914	638	Telecom Plus	875		5,7	8,6
131⅛	83⅛	**Vodafone**	118½		3,3	-83,8

Transport

260	203½	Braemar‡	223½		3,1	30,9
5485	3365	Clarkson‡	5065		2,3	23,7
683½	332½	EasyJet	674		2,0	10,2
225¾	152½	FirstGroup	179		4,0	8,4
554	325	Fisher (James)	442		...	-50,8
492½	332½	**Intl Cons Air**	438¼		1,6	7,2
699½	458	Irish Cont	635		...	15,9
34	17	Mobico Group	23¾		...	-1,1
7	1½	Sutton Harbour♦	3½		...	-0,3
1453	832	Wizz Air	1101		...	...

Utilities

220¼	151½	**Centrica**‡	155⅝		3,6	-103,6
937½	626	Drax Group	775		3,9	37,4
485	420	Jersey Electricity	435		5,0	12,1
1428½	1000	**National Grid**	1170		4,1	17,9
606	439½	Pennon‡	479		6,1	24,7
3335	2381	**Severn Trent**	3146		4,0	25,5
2767½	1597	**SSE**‡	2449		2,8	23,2
1497	1072	**United Utilities**	1431		3,7	16,6

INVESTMENT COMPANIES

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
4497	1825	**3i Group**	2828		3,0	5,2
399½	325	3i Infrastructure	395½		3,4	12,4
1786	1408¼	Aberforth Smlr	1780		2,7	27,8
1394	1178	**Alliance Witan**‡	1379		2,1	74,5
405	321	Artemis UK Future Lead	400½		3,9	32,4
200	116½	Athelney Trust	165		6,1	14,5
273	235¼	AVI Global	265½		1,7	52,4
194	154½	AVI Japan	172½		1,3	58,7
331	277	Baillie Gifford Ch Gr	306		0,8	...
133	91⅛	Baillie Gifford Eur Gr	127½		0,6	...
1090	811½	Baillie Gifford Jpn	1078		0,9	...
231	180¼	Baillie Gifford UK Gr‡	227		2,7	36,4
154¼	121¼	Bankers Invstmt Tst	151⅜		1,9	67,4
445	387¼	BH Macro GBP	424		...	20,0
1786	882	Biotech Growth	1738		...	-914,7
289½	201	BlckRck Amer Inc‡	279		5,3	98,6
205	123	BlckRck Eng&Res Inc	186		3,1	53,1
208	164½	BlckRck Fro Inv	194		3,9	25,9
625	507	BlackRock Grt Euro	610		1,2	88,5
240	200	BlckRck Inc&Grth	234		3,3	32,4
288⅜	230½	BlckRck Smlr‡	276½		2,9	31,6
1076	562	BlckRck Wld Min	1060		2,3	44,0
1665	1280	Brown Adv US Sm	1585		...	-264,6
1588	1336	Brunner‡	1580		1,7	56,7
402	312	Caledonia Inv	397		1,9	51,6
599	486	City of Lon IT	591		3,7	27,4
155⅛	80¼	Crystal Amber Fd	82½		-59,8	...
592	439⅞	CT Priv Eq Ord	490		5,8	...
373	320	CT UK Cap & Inc	358		3,8	29,5
120	92	CT UK HIT B	109		5,5	22,5
126	97	CT UK HIT	122		4,9	25,2
480¼	460	Dunedin Ent‡	475		...	...
867	737½	Edinburgh IT	860		3,7	32,3
294½	188¼	Edin Wwide	266½		...	-241,1
1332	325¼	**F&C Inv Trust**	345¼		1,2	76,8
672	546	Fidlty Asian Val	626		3,3	27,8
339	241	Fidelity China Sp	264		3,4	28,6
1574	845	FdityEmrgMkt	1508		1,3	66,0
447½	367½	Fidelity European Trust	439		2,3	38,8
479½	372	Fidlty Spec Val	473½		2,2	38,6
898	706¼	Fins Gwth & Inc	836		2,4	44,2
85⅜	69¼	GCP Infrastructure‡	83⅝		8,4	38,9
370	316	Global Opps Tst	348		3,0	44,6
116	113	Golden Prospect	114½		-17,1	...
68⅞	57⅛	Greencoat Renew‡	67⅝	– ½	-16,8	...
117	92¼	Greencoat UK Wind	110¼		9,7	-12,7
346	250	Hansa Investment Co	334		1,3	75,9
335	244	Hansa Inv Co A	330		1,3	75,0
3500	2745	Hbrvest Glbl Pt Eq	3380		...	-57,3
214	173¼	Hend High Inc	207		5,4	18,4
998	769	Hend Smlr	989		2,9	37,9
3290½	2285	Herald Inv Trust	2995		...	...
512	318⅛	HgCapital Trust	440½		1,1	...
141	107¼	HICL Infra‡	137⅜		6,2	10,0
1611½	1288¼	ICG Ent Tr	1494		2,8	-201,8
494¼	379	Impax Env Mkts	450½		1,1	91,2

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
519	369	Invesco Asia Dragon Tr	503		3,8	51,2
178½	150⅛	Invesco Bond Inc	171½		7,1	13,1
427	318	Invesco Glbl Eq Inc	415		3,9	82,8
1258	1041	JPM American‡	1218		0,9	...
652	398	JPM Asia Gro & Inc	592		5,3	...
313	260	JPM China‡	275		4,9	70,7
986	791¾	JPM Claverhs‡	978		3,7	29,0
310	181¼	JPM Emrg EMEA Sec	239½		0,3	...
181¼	118⅜	JPM Em Mkts	168		4,5	73,0
666	548	JPMorgan Euro	643		2,5	35,4
221	148	JPM Em Mkts Div Inc	211		2,8	37,1
641	529¾	JPM GG&I‡	620		4,0	75,0
1098	799	JPM India‡	880		5,0	...
867	661	JPM Japan	818		1,1	80,6
463	365	JPM Smllr Co	435		0,7	...
1290	977⅜	Law Debenture	1254		3,0	33,7
191½	145½	Lowland Inv	186½		3,6	27,7
138⅜	137¾	Marwyn Val Inv	138		15,2	...
290½	234¼	Mercantile IT	289		2,9	31,2
691	536	Merchants Trust	684		4,3	22,4
804	682	Mid Wynd	800		1,0	...
1664	1366	Monks Inv Trust‡	1636		0,1	...
189	142	Montanaro Eur Sml	181		0,9	93,3
1036	854⅜	Murray Income Trust‡	1002		4,1	26,0
376	293	Murray Intl	372½		3,4	26,8
437	345	Pacific Assets Trust‡	425		...	75,9
409	325	Pantheon Intl	394		...	...
5095	3636	**Pershing Sqr**‡	3930		1,4	3,8
558	514	Personal Assets‡	556		1,0	92,2
743½	385⅞	**Polar CapTech**	656		...	-781,0
80½	63¼	Renewables Infra‡	77½	+ ½	9,8	-14,3
2645	1932	RIT Cap Ptnr	2565		1,8	...
990⅜	490	Riverstone	591		...	-369,3
738	496	Schroder TotRt	712		1,6	72,6
892	608	Schrd Asia Pac	842		1,5	63,7
380	311⅜	Schrod Inc Gwth	376		3,9	30,0
401	276	Schrod Jap Gwth	387		3,1	56,0
790	652	Schrod UKMid	782		2,9	31,2
17¼	12¾	Schroder UK PP Tr	17⅜		...	-72,5
572	480⅛	Scot American‡	565		2,9	36,1
1563	1015¾	**Scot Mortgage**	1492½		0,3	...
88	75½	Sequoia Eco	85⅛		8,0	12,5
253	215⅞	STS Glbl Inc Grwth	229		3,7	35,3
352	198¼	Temp Emg Mkt	322½		1,6	59,8
429½	334	Temple Bar‡	420½		3,7	30,5
198⅜	162¾	The Glbl Smaller‡	193⅜		1,6	65,6
9	0⅝	Potentially AI	6		-1,5	...
364½	291	TR Property	305		5,3	19,3
204	197¾	UIL	204		20,1	...
302	243	Utilico Emerging Mkt	279		3,5	20,6
865	682	Vietnam Ent Inv	740		...	4,8
401½	320	Ww Health	389½		0,6	...

◆AIM company; # Price at suspension; ‡ Ex dividend; ‡ Ex scrip; ▲ Ex rights issue; ▼ Ex all; § Ex capital distribution; ☆ figures or report awaited; . . . No significant data. Companies in bold are constituents of the FTSE 100 Index. Investment Cos sector Nav Dis or Prm supplied by ICE Data Services.

Exchange rates

Australia $	1.89082 (+0.00095)
Canada $	1.8779 (-0.00394)
Denmark Kr	8.71817 (-0.01353)
Euro	1.166 (-0.002)
Hong Kong $	10.619 (+0.009)
Hungary	425.73 (-0.58)
Indonesia	24027.35 (+103.85)
Israel	4.0577 (+0.0098)
Japan Yen	216.408 (+0.083)
New Zealand $	2.29 (+0.0011)
Norway Kr	12.65959 (-0.01611)
Poland	5.04962 (-0.02048)
Russia	116.936 (+0.338)
S Africa	21.8222 (-0.0482)
Sweden Kr	12.9748 (-0.0233)
Switzerland Fr	1.09525 (+0.0006)
Turkey Lira	65.3874 (+0.0931)
USA $	1.3549 (+0.0015)

Gold/precious metals

(US dollars per ounce)

Bullion: Open $4457.8

Close $4430.862 **High** $4472.175

Low $4396.676

AM $4602.00 **PM** $4562.75

Platinum $1785.908

Silver $66.265

Palladium $1364.114

Money rates %

Base Rates Clearing Banks: 3.75%
ECB Refi 2.40%
Fed Fund 3.5-3.75%
Halifax Mortgage Rate (SVR) 7.24%

Sterling spot and forward rates

Mkt Rates for	Range	Close	1 month	3 month
Copenhagen	8.7182	8.7334	-129.103	-391.121
Euro	1.1660	1.1679	-13.35	-39.91
Montreal	1.8780	1.8816	-24.92	-77.12
New York	1.3549	1.3531	0.335	2
Oslo	12.6596	12.6703	48.27	166.54
Tokyo	216.4080	216.2010	-51.28	-151.15
Zurich	1.0953	1.0940	-37.03	-111.21

Other sterling

Argentine peso	2044.89624-2044.89819
Australian dollar	1.89079-1.89096
Bahrain dinar	0.50990-0.51190
Brazilian real	7.01730-7.01930
Euro	1.16610-1.16690
Hong Kong dollar	10.62000-10.62400
Indian rupee	128.92570-129.00571
Indonesian rupiah	24027.34961-24067.34961
Kuwaiti dinar	0.41720-0.41920
Malaysian ringgit	5.45420-5.45620
New Zealand dollar	2.29000-2.29046
Singaporean dollar	1.72321-1.72356
South African rand	21.82220-21.83594
UAE dirham	4.97640-4.97840

Dollar rates

Australia	1.39510-1.39590
Canada	1.38593-1.38601
Denmark	6.43434-6.43453
Euro	0.86060-0.86100
Hong Kong	7.83860-7.83960
Japan	159.70500-159.70700
Malaysia	4.02200-4.03000
Norway	9.34265-9.34533
Singapore	1.27181-1.27194
Sweden	9.57690-9.57930
Switzerland	0.80832-0.80834

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ICE

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	INSIDE	OCEAN VIEW†	BALCONY	CLUB BALCONY (1 LEFT)	PRINCESS GRILL (1 LEFT)	GRAND SUITE (1 LEFT)
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	INSIDE	OCEAN VIEW†	BALCONY	CLUB BALCONY	PRINCESS GRILL	PENTHOUSE SUITE
Full Board Fare (pp)	£599	£629	£799	£1,319	£2,099	£2,419
All-Inc Fare from (pp)	£1,029	£1,049	£1,229	£1,739	£2,519	£2,839

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DURATION/DEPARTURE	SHIP	ITINERARY
19nts 05/09/27	Queen Victoria	Depart Southampton - Lisbon, Portugal - Cagliari, Sardinia - Katakolon (tours to Olympia×), Greece - Corfu, Greece - Dubrovnik, Croatia - Split, Croatia - Valletta, Malta - Cádiz (tours to Seville×), Spain - Arrive in Southampton

	INSIDE	OCEAN VIEW†	BALCONY	CLUB BALCONY	PRINCESS GRILL (1 LEFT)	GRAND SUITE
Full Board Fare (pp)	£2,879	£2,969	£4,179	SOLD	£9,899	£23,399
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	INSIDE	OCEAN VIEW	BALCONY†	CLUB BALCONY	PRINCESS GRILL	QUEENS GRILL
Full Board Fare (pp)	£1,069	£1,299	£1,789	£2,099	£3,419	£4,399
All-Inc Fare from (pp)	£1,789	£2,029	£2,499	£2,819	£4,139	£5,119

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DURATION/DEPARTURE	SHIP	ITINERARY
14nts 21/12/27	Queen Anne	Depart Southampton - Lisbon, Portugal ★CHRISTMAS EVE★ - ★Spending Christmas Day relaxing at sea★ - Arrecife, Lanzarote - Las Palmas, Gran Canaria - Santa Cruz, Tenerife - Puerto del Rosario, Fuerteventura - Funchal, Madeira (overnight) ★NEW YEAR'S EVE★ - Arrive in Southampton

	INSIDE	OCEAN VIEW	BALCONY†	CLUB BALCONY	PRINCESS GRILL	QUEENS GRILL
Full Board Fare (pp)	£2,479	£3,369	£3,519	£5,039	£6,749	£9,089
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	INSIDE	OCEAN VIEW	BALCONY†	CLUB BALCONY	PRINCESS GRILL	QUEENS GRILL
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Opera singer happy to answer back to directors
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Obituaries

Eric Slater

One of the youngest troopers in the SAS who was decorated for his 'selfless bravery' under heavy fire during the Dhofar War

Though few had even heard of it at the time, the Dhofar War was one of Britain's most effective military interventions of the past century. In 1975 Sergeant "Rover" Slater of the 22nd Special Air Service Regiment, which operated under the cover name of "British Army Training Team (Oman)", was caught up in the Dhofar Liberation Front's (DLF) desperate attempts to stave off defeat by the Sultan of Oman's Armed Forces (SAF).

The insurgency, backed by communist South Yemen (later the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen), had begun ten years earlier in the south-western Omani province of Dhofar, and until 1970, when the Sandhurst-trained Sultan Qaboos bin Said led a palace coup against his father, it had steadily gained ground.

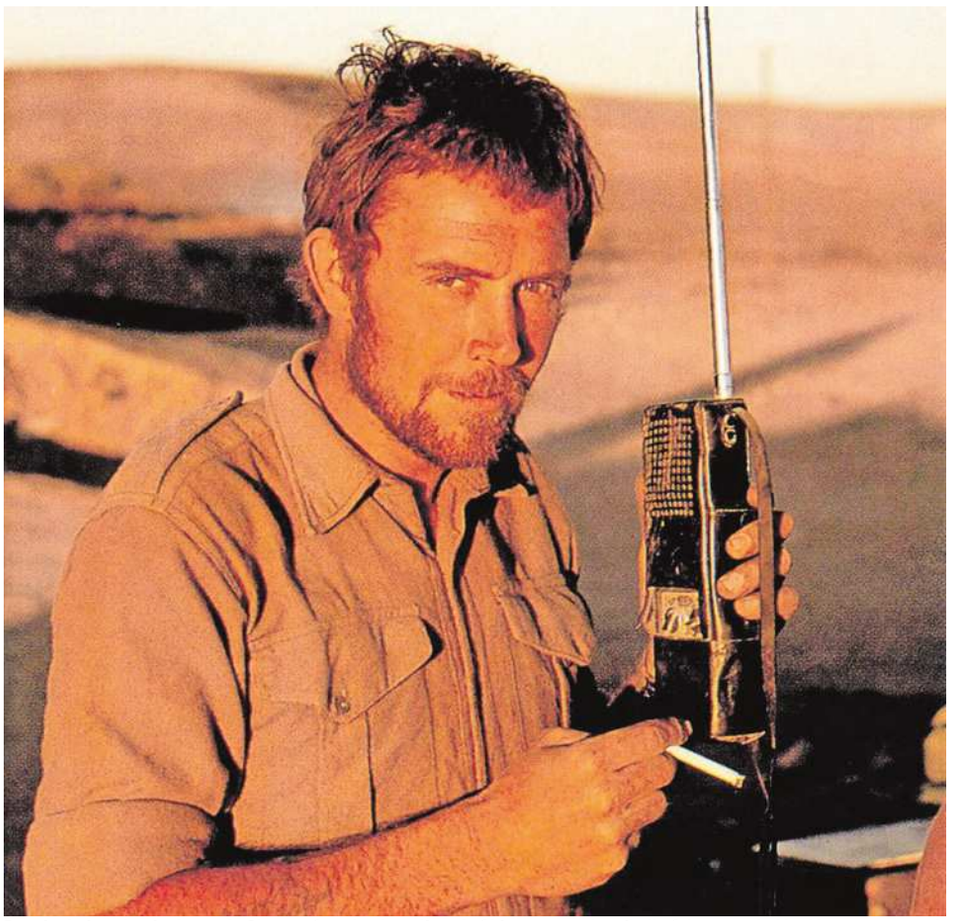
In addition to the "training team", Qaboos asked for British officers to be seconded to help to strengthen SAF, together with military aid from the Shah's Iran and Jordan. By 1975, 22 SAS's classic counter-insurgency "hearts and minds" tactics had won over many of the Dhofari tribes and mustered increasing numbers of surrendered insurgents and loyal tribesmen in "firqats" (groups, from the Arabic "to separate") to take the fight back to the DLF. In autumn that year, the tide was very much on the turn.

Early in the morning on September 19, Slater, aged 33, was commanding the forward element of an observation patrol comprising nine SAS and firqatmen. A second SAS group led by the troop commander Captain (later Lieutenant General Sir) Cedric Delves lay in support 150 yards above and to its rear on what should have been dominating ground but for thick mist that had descended unexpectedly, compounded by dense scrub.

The groups were out of sight of one another and about to adjust accordingly when the support group went into "contact", ambushing a lead party of what proved to be a large group of "adoo" (enemy) during which an SAS trooper was mortally wounded. Under increasingly heavy fire, the support group evacuated their casualty, leaving a reduced number to hold a rallying point upon which Slater's patrol now had to pull back.

As they did so, a machinegun opened up at close range, seriously wounding another SAS trooper. Slater helped to carry him to a wadi (dry river bed) and tried to radio for help from an SAF platoon and armoured cars 1,000 yards or more distant, but from dead ground he had to relay through the rear group, and it took a while to make contact. The mist remained thick and the adoo, having now closed with his patrol, concentrated to destroy it, pouring heavy fire into the wadi and twice trying to rush the patrol with groups of 10 to 15 men firing machineguns and throwing grenades.

Nearly every one of the patrol was wounded by splinters. Slater himself was shot through the neck; his scalp was twice grazed by bullets and his right arm peppered with grenade fragments. Nevertheless, he continued to control the patrol's fire, killing a number of adoo and stopping both assaults in their tracks.



Despite being shot in the neck, Slater refused to be relieved of his command until all of the wounded had been evacuated

After a long quarter of an hour, the SAF platoon and armoured cars managed to find them and drove off the enemy. As the SAS's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) Tony Jeapes, recounted in his book *SAS Operation Oman*, written in 1977 but taking three years to clear for publication, Delves, having moved down to the wadi with his heart in his mouth, was relieved to find everyone alive, although two, including Slater, were only semi-conscious having been overdosed with morphine. Shaking Slater gently, he asked how he was: "A lazy grin spread over [Slater's] face. 'It took a long time for the cavalry to get here,' he said."

"Although by now very weak," wrote Jeapes in his recommendation for a gallantry award, "Sergeant Slater refused to be relieved of his command until he was sure his wounded had been evacuated. Throughout this fierce encounter [he] frequently exposed himself to enemy small-arms fire and grenades in order to hold his position and he personally accounted for several of the enemy. Even under intense fire his sense of humour, his coolness and his determination steadied his patrol and inspired them to sell their lives dearly." Jeapes concluded that Slater's "selfless example of bravery and leadership [was] the key factor in enabling his patrol to survive the onslaught of a substantially larger enemy force".

Slater was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM), instituted in 1854 during the Crimean War for non-commissioned ranks to recognise "distinguished, gallant and good conduct in the field". Only two years later, after public lobbying for an award for "distinguished and prominent personal gallantry" irrespective of rank, was the Victoria Cross created. The

Slater was among the top free-fall parachutists produced by his regiment

DCM subsequently stood a close second until replaced by the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross in 1993. Two of the five members of the honours committee considered Slater's conduct worthy of the VC, which would have been the SAS's first.

In keeping with the secrecy of the military assistance to Oman, no citation was to be published, and Slater was only to be identified by his parent regiment, not SAS.

Eric ("Rover") Slater, the second of four sons, was born in 1942 in Dukinfield, now Greater Manchester but then in the county of Cheshire. His father, a First World War veteran, died when "Rover" was ten. Although things were evidently tough, his mother refused to allow him to leave Crescent Road Secondary Modern School in Dukinfield at 15 and "go down the pit", instead reluctantly signing for him to join the army as a boy soldier. In 1957, therefore, he joined the Infantry Junior Leaders' Battalion (IJLB) at Plymouth, badged to his county regiment, the Cheshires.

The IJLB, designed to prepare young recruits over a period of two years for promotion as non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and warrant officers, combined military training, education and leadership development in a way not dissimilar to Sandhurst. In the early 1980s it was reckoned that seven out of ten infantry regimental sergeant majors had trained there. Slater would be one of them.

On passing out of IJLB as a junior (cadet) sergeant, but too young to join the 1st Battalion in Malaya, he was posted to the Cheshires' depot in Chester. At that time, boys' service counted towards the three years required before a soldier could attempt SAS selection. Slater began selection in August 1959 but was not badged until January 1960 as his parachute course took place during the winter when suitable jumping conditions were few.

Joining 22 SAS a month before his 19th birthday, he was one of, if not the, youngest troopers since the Second World War. Nicknames being almost mandatory, he was called "Pup", which on his 21st birthday was upgraded to "Rover". Between 1960 and 1967 he rose from trooper to corporal in Freefall Troop, A Squadron, seeing action in Aden, Oman and Borneo.

In 1966 he married Barbara Eady, a nurse, whom he had met at the John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford, while doing a medical attachment after his patrol medic's course. However, the following year he was involved in a violent altercation while on a training course at Middle Wallop in Hampshire. Loss of self-control being a capital offence in the SAS, he was "RTU'd" — returned to unit. Though it was devastating, one of the more senior SAS NCOs, believing that at 25 there was the potential for redemption, advised him to get qualified in mortars with his battalion so that he could bring the skills back when he returned. Slater was soon the Cheshires' mortar platoon sergeant.

Two years later he was back with 22 SAS in a freefall troop, but this time in D Squadron, with whom he rose to squadron sergeant major, seeing action additionally in Northern Ireland, for which he was mentioned in dispatches, before in 1981 he was promoted to Warrant Officer Class 1 and appointed RSM of 21 SAS, one of the two reservist regiments.

After leaving the army in 1984, he spent the early years escorting various players into Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion. Later he bought the Nags Head in Canon Pyon on the outskirts of Hereford and for five years combined being a publican with various security-related jobs until selling up to focus fully on the burgeoning security sector, with short "jobs" at home and overseas.

His first marriage was dissolved shortly after leaving the army, and ten years later he married Anne Ocheshorn, a Canadian who was a human resources manager in London. Anne died last year. He subsequently married his long-time partner, Melanie Keeley, a chef. Two children of his first marriage and one of the third survive him: Karen, a social worker; Andy, who followed his father into the army and is now a consultant; and Alexandra, a police officer.

In *SAS Operation Oman* Jeapes described Slater as "a tall, brown-haired man with a slight stoop and like many SAS, he had grown a long Victorian moustache, which made his lopsided grin even more menacing than normal. One of the top free-fall parachutists in the regiment, he had been a tearaway in his youth, but maturity, responsibility and marriage had sobered him down and turned him into a formidable senior NCO."

Delves, who would go on to command D Squadron in the Falklands, and subsequently the regiment, described Slater simply as "possibly the finest minor tactician I ever knew".

Eric Slater DCM, SAS soldier, was born on February 16, 1942. He died of undisclosed causes on July 14, 2026, aged 84

Register

Ileana Cotrubas

Vibrant soprano who was all too prepared to answer back to — and then walk out on — her producers and directors

Ileana Cotrubas was visiting her doctor in London on January 7, 1975, unaware that La Scala opera house, Milan, was trying to reach her. Mirella Freni, who was due to sing Mimi in Puccini's *La bohème* with Luciano Pavarotti that evening, was unwell. When she returned home to Sevenoaks in Kent, her husband announced: "They want you to sing Mimi at La Scala." That's nice, she replied. "Then he said, 'They want you to sing it tonight.' So I said, 'No thanks, I haven't sung Mimi for a year, I will be nervous, I will forget something. But he insisted."

For La Scala, it was another misadventure for their *La bohème*. Herbert von Karajan, who had conducted the premiere of Franco Zeffirelli's staging in 1964, was suffering from a slipped disc and no substitute could be found. Eventually Georges Prêtre took over, though the opening night was delayed from December 27 to January 7. By then, Freni had come down with the flu.

Cotrubas arrived under police escort with minutes to spare, having applied her stage make-up on the flight from London. "Then suddenly, it was happening, and I was on the stage," she said. "Pavarotti did *Che gelida manina* with a huge success. Then, before I started, there was such a silence in the audience because everybody was curious to hear this new person."

As she finished her big aria, *Mi chiamano Mimì*, they erupted. "I was sick with emotion ... my hands began to shake. Pavarotti whispered to me, 'Don't cry now. Wait until the end when you are dead'," she recalled two years later. The Milan papers were unanimous in acclaiming the new star. Some even expressed disappointment when Freni (obituary, February 15, 2020) resumed the role.

British audiences could be forgiven for wondering what had taken the Italians so long. A London agent had heard her in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* in Frankfurt in 1968 and mentioned over dinner that Glyndebourne needed a leading lady for Debussy's *Pelléas and Mélisande*. First, she would have to audition for John Pritchard, who was conducting in Munich.

Cotrubas took a train there and sang an aria from *The Magic Flute* and excerpts from *Mélisande* for him. "At the end, he said, 'You are my Mélisande," she told Pritchard's biographer. "With this part, I made my debut in England in 1969. It was very beautiful." The critics agreed. "A beautiful voice, so calm, detached and inviolable in appearance, Miss Cotrubas is the undoubted discovery of the evening," enthused one.

She returned to Glyndebourne in 1970 in the title role of Cavalli's *La Calisto*, a long-neglected work packed in Peter Hall's staging with topless girls, nearly bottomless men, lesbianism and lechery. "Demure, lovely to look at and hear, deeply affected when carried away by passion," wrote William Mann of her in The Times.

This was the first of Cotrubas's many fruitful Glyndebourne collaborations with Hall, including Susanna in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* (1973) conducted by Pritchard and Tytania in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1981). Hall also cast her as Tatyana in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* at the Royal Opera House in 1971. "I have a lot of resemblance with Tatyana," she said. "She is very complex. This is the Russian soul, to be happy in unhappiness, and it is my own problem. I torment myself."

Not all directors met her high standards. "I am very conservative," she confessed. "Of course, it is right for people to bring something new to a production but when somebody does it without really knowing the music and the text then it is very bad for everyone." In 1973 she walked out of *Eugene Onegin* in Vienna claiming that Rudolf Noelte, the director, was trying to impose his ideas. "Noelte said, 'Tatyana does this, Tatyana does that...' So I asked him, 'Whose Tatyana? Your Tatyana? Or my Tatyana? I left," she said. There were similar tales from the Metropolitan Opera, New York.

No such trouble was reported in Britain, where she was held in great affection by audiences. "Yes, it is true. They love me there. And I love them too," she told The New York Times. Asked why, she furrowed her brow and paused. "Maybe," she said, "it is because I am so good."

MARCELLO MENCARINI/LEBRECHT MUSIC AND ARTS/ALAMY

Cotrubas had no children — she felt they would not suit her nomadic lifestyle

Ileana Cotrubas was born in Galati, eastern Romania, near the Moldovan border, in 1939. Her parents Vasile, a civil servant, and Maria both sang, as did a sister who pursued a career on the straight stage. She joined a children's choir, recalling that "the first time I entered an opera house it was to sing, not to listen: I was nine years old and a member of the children's chorus in *Carmen*".

Even as a child she was a compulsive, even impulsive, performer. On one occasion she decided to run away to Hollywood with a couple of friends. "I stole a little money, put on several layers of clothing and was about to make for Constanta [a Black Sea port] when my mother spotted me. I wasn't allowed out for a week," she said.

In 1952 the family moved to Bucharest, where she attended the Scoala Speciala de Muzica and then spent five years at the Conservatory working with Constantin Stroescu. "My voice was then very 'white', a typical children's chorus kind of voice, without vibrato," she said. "Many times we nearly stopped and gave up, but I realised from the beginning he was right. So I stayed." She also took classes in music history, piano, harmony, dance, gymnastics, "even duelling [and] fencing".

After winning a Dutch singing competition she joined Frankfurt Opera, where she met Manfred Ramin, a conductor who became her coach and mentor. They were married in 1972, later buying a villa on the French Riviera. He survives her. "No, we have no children. It is a mad world, a dangerous one for children: and when you live like gypsies, as we do, then the children are no more yours," she said.

On stage she was the consummate actress, making full use of her deep-set lustrous eyes and raven hair. Audiences at Covent Garden saw her as Norina in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, Adina in his *L'elisir d'amore* and Antonia in Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. She was also Violetta in Verdi's *La traviata*, Elisabetta in his *Don Carlo* and Alice Ford in *Falstaff*. After 20 years of hitting the top notes, Cotrubas suddenly announced her retirement from the opera stage, telling The Times: "I want to leave while I am still at the top and not spoil what I have done."

She joined Joan Sutherland on the judging panel for the 1995 Cardiff Singer of the World competition but did not enjoy singing on cruise ships, telling The Times during a musical voyage around the Mediterranean: "We're already so naked on stage; here the people are too close, and you can see them nodding off after dinner."

Cotrubas worked closely with her students, including the soprano Angela Gheorghiu, her compatriot. She also used her masterclasses at Aldeburgh to pass on to young singers her great passion and respect for the profession, adding: "I might also try to teach them to answer back to pig-headed producers."

Ileana Cotrubas, soprano, was born on June 9, 1939. She died on August 20, 2026, aged 87

Bou Meng

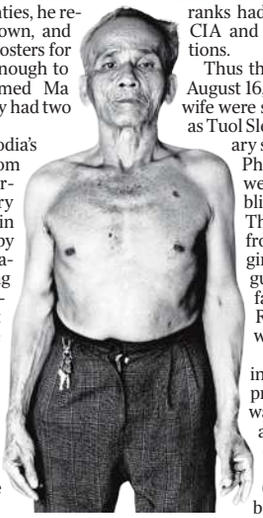
Survivor of Cambodia's 1970s S-21 torture camp who was spared death by painting portraits of communist icons, including Pol Pot

More than 14,000 men, women and children are believed to have died through executions, torture and forced labour in the infamous S-21 prison run by Cambodia's communist Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979. Just seven are known to have survived, and Bou Meng was one of them.

Though he was beaten and tortured, Bou Meng was spared certain death because he was an artist, and Kang Kek Iew, the camp's commandant, wanted some portraits painted. Kek Iew, also known as Duch, ordered his prisoner to paint portraits of Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge leader, warning that he would be killed if they were not good enough. He had him paint portraits of Lenin, Karl Marx, China's Mao Zedong, North Korea's Kim Il-sung and other communist icons. He also commissioned a portrait of Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh, Pol Pot's bitter enemy, but with the body of a dog.

Bou Meng survived, but his wife did not. Nor did he ever find his two children. After the Khmer Rouge regime fell, Cambodia's new government turned S-21 into a genocide museum. In his retirement, Bou Meng would go there most days to tell tourists of the "hell on earth" that he had endured, and to sell copies of his biography at $10 each.

Bou Meng was born into a peasant family near the Mekong river in rural Cambodia in 1941, when the country was still a French protectorate. As a boy he was sent to live in a *wat*, a Buddhist monastery, where he received a rudimentary education and learnt to paint. In his early twenties, he returned to his home town, and found work painting posters for cinemas. He earned enough to marry a woman named Ma Yoeun in 1965, and they had two children.



In 1970 Cambodia's Prince Norodom Sihanouk was overthrown in a military coup and exiled in China. Seduced by Khmer Rouge propaganda, Bou Meng joined its rural insurgency in the hope that it would overthrow the new US-backed government and restore Sihanouk to power. During the ensuing civil war he painted propaganda posters for the Khmer Rouge while his wife became a nurse.

The Khmer Rouge finally seized Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital, in April 1975. Bou Meng was employed in a government office and his wife in a hospital. But the new regime proved ruthless and paranoid, believing its ranks had been infiltrated by the CIA and other hostile organisations.

Thus the purges began, and on August 16, 1977 Bou Meng and his wife were sent to S-21, also known as Tuol Sleng, a converted secondary school near the centre of Phnom Penh. There they were stripped, shackled, blindfolded and separated. The last words he heard from his wife was her begging for her life, and her guards screaming in her face that the Khmer Rouge never arrested the wrong person.

Bou Meng was placed in a cell full of emaciated prisoners. For weeks he was tortured "like an animal", subjected to electrocution and beaten with sticks and whips (he bore the scars on his back for the rest of his life). He finally "confessed" — falsely — to being a CIA agent and named some alleged collaborators, but to no avail.

S-21 was once described as "the place where people went in but never came out". Like thousands of his fellow prisoners, Bou Meng would inevitably have died there, or been sent to one of the Khmer Rouge's infamous "killing fields" nearby to be shot, had a guard not shouted out one day: "Can anyone paint pictures?"

Using a black and white photograph, he took three months to paint his first outsized portrait of Pol Pot, during which he enjoyed better conditions and received medical care. Kek Iew, the commandant, subsequently ordered several more portraits, enabling Bou Meng to survive until the Vietnamese army seized Phnom Penh and overthrew the Khmer Rouge in January 1979.

In those final days Bou Meng and other prisoners were forcibly marched west out of the capital, past the "killing fields" of Choeung Ek where they could smell the rotting bodies, until their guards abruptly abandoned them. Bou Meng fled north through a ruined country where more than 1.5 million people had died during the Khmer Rouge's genocidal four-year rule. He later returned to S-21 to search for records of his wife and found a photo of her taken immediately after her arrest. Amid the debris he also found a half-finished portrait he had painted of Pol Pot.

In 2009 he testified at Kek Iew's trial, and asked the former commandant what had happened to Ma Yoeun. Kek Iew, who was imprisoned for life for crimes against humanity and died in 2020, replied that she had probably been sent to a "killing field". It was reported that his two children had starved to death in a camp for children.

Bou Meng eventually married his second wife, Duong Chhun Ny, with whom he had a daughter, Meng Thavry, and earned a living by painting murals for Buddhist temples. In retirement, he would return most days to the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum to tell visitors of the horrors that happened there in the hope they would never be repeated. He said the ghosts of those who died in S-21 would visit him in his dreams, demanding that he told their stories and secured a measure of justice for them.

Bou Meng, survivor of Cambodia's S-21 torture camp, was born on April 4, 1941. He died on August 14, 2026, aged 85

Law Report

Amendment of modern slavery guidance unlawful, court rules

King's Bench Division
Published September 1, 2026
Rex (AYA and others) v Secretary of State for the Home Department
Before Mr Justice Sheldon
[2026] EWHC 1742 (Admin)
Judgment July 10, 2026

The home secretary's decision to amend the statutory guidance for modern slavery, by removing the right to request reconsideration of a negative trafficking decision by individuals whom the home secretary intended to remove to a country being a party to both the European Convention against Trafficking and the European Convention on Human Rights, was unlawful, and that decision had a negative impact on some of the claimants.

The administrative court of the King's Bench Division so held in allowing the judicial review claims against the home secretary by five anonymised claimants who were either removed or faced removal to France under the UK/France: Agreement on the Prevention of Dangerous Journeys Treaty 2025 and claimed to be victims of human trafficking before their arrival in the United Kingdom.

Sonali Naik KC, **Gordon Lee**, **Josephine Fathers** and **Catherine Meredith** for the claimant AYA; **Sam Grodzinski KC**, **Shu Shin Luh**, **Jennifer MacLeod** and **Agata Patyna** for the claimant EXR; **Sam Grodzinski KC**, **Shu Shin Luh**, **Jennifer MacLeod** and **David Sellwood** for the claimant HRE; **Sam Grodzinski KC**, **Shu Shin Luh**, **Jennifer MacLeod** and **Grace Capel** for the claimant GIP; **Sonali Naik KC**, **James Robottom**, **Eleanor Mitchell** and **Jessica Sutton** for the claimant KAG; **Kate Grange KC**, **Cathryn McGahey KC**, **Edward Brown KC**, **Mark Vinall**, **Jack Anderson** and **Naomi Hart** for the secretary of state.

MR JUSTICE SHELDON said that the secretary of state's amendment to the statutory guidance for modern slavery was unlawful as it significantly diluted the effectiveness of the identification mechanism for a certain cohort of alleged trafficking victims.

Having signed and ratified the European Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings ("Ecat"), the UK was under the duty to prevent and combat human trafficking as well as to protect the human rights of trafficking victims.

In this connection the Modern Slavery Act 2015 ("the act") was enacted, under which the home secretary had issued statutory guidance for the identification, protection, care and support for victims.

Under the statutory scheme, where individuals claimed to be victims of human trafficking, the competent authority was required to decide (i) whether there were reasonable grounds to believe that they were such victims, and if so (ii) whether there were conclusive grounds to believe so. Individuals receiving positive reasonable-grounds or conclusive-grounds decisions would be entitled to certain support and assistance as well as the right not to be removed from UK during the recovery period. Individuals receiving negative decisions could request reconsideration of the decisions on the grounds of new evidence or inconsistency between the decisions and the statutory guidance.

Last September, the home secretary made amendments to the statutory guidance that in effect removed the right to request reconsideration of a negative "reasonable-grounds" or "conclusive-grounds" decision by individuals facing removal to a country being a signatory state to Ecat and the European Convention on Human Rights ("ECHR").

The rationale for the change was to remove what was seen as a possible barrier to the removal of individuals entering UK via small-boat crossings to France under the UK/France Agreement on the Prevention of Dangerous Journeys Treaty 2025 (CP 1377) ("the treaty").

Five individuals, who claimed to be victims of human trafficking before their arrivals in UK and were removed or at risk of removal to France under the treaty, sought judicial review of the home secretary's amendments to the statutory guidance, contending, among other things, that the amendments were unlawful as they undermined the effectiveness of the trafficking victim identification mechanism and therefore incompatible with Ecat, ECHR and the act, and amounted to an unlawful fetter of the home secretary's discretion to consider individual cases on their merits.

The home secretary was required by the act to issue guidance as she considered "appropriate" about the arrangements for determining whether a person was, or was likely to be, a victim of slavery or human trafficking. While the home secretary was afforded a discretion in making those arrangements, that discretion was not unbounded given the importance of the identification of trafficking victims, which provided a gateway to important rights including the necessary assistance and support and the right not to be removed from the UK.

Further, the home secretary had to act consistently with Ecat to which the statutory scheme under the act was designed to give effect. Even though Ecat did not expressly prescribe any particular arrangements for identifying trafficking victims, it remained necessary for that process to be robust and effective.

In practice and under the statutory guidance, the reasonable-grounds decision was taken by trained staff after considering matters including credibility and inconsistencies in account at considerable pace. It was noted that for those arriving in the UK by small boats and falling within the ambit of the treaty, they were often malnourished and deprived of sleep because of the difficult journey and had language barriers. Therefore those individuals were likely to experience difficulties in properly answering the questions at interviews, while critical evidence in support of their cases might only be available at a later stage. By reason of the amendments, potentially decisive evidence which came after the decision was made would be disregarded.

In the circumstances, there were bound to be many cases where a trafficking victim would not be identified, which meant that the identification process could not be regarded as robust and effective. That could not have been within the contemplation of parliament when conferring discretion on the home secretary to make those arrangements under the act and the amendments were therefore unlawful.

The unlawfulness of the amendments could not be saved by the fact that the removal only applied where the alleged trafficking victim was removed to France or a country that was signatory to both Ecat and ECHR, given that the domestic legislation did not provide for any such exception. Moreover, the obligation to identify a trafficking victim under Ecat applied to each party and could not be delegated to another signatory.

Since judicial review was concerned with examining the decision-making process based on what was available to the decision-maker and did not cater for fresh evidence, the fact that those individuals could seek judicial review would not make much difference. There remained a real possibility that requests for reconsideration that might be worthy were not reviewed.

In fact, the evidence suggested that the discretion to reconsider was only exercised where litigation was threatened and not merely where additional evidence was put forward. There was limited reconsideration of the negative reasonable-grounds decision which only focused on the correctness of the decision based on what was available at the time of the decision. Limiting the exercise of discretion to reopen negative decisions in such a way constituted an unlawful fetter on the home secretary's discretion to identify trafficking victims.

Overall, the unlawful amendments had made a real difference in the cases of the second and fifth claimants, while the home secretary would retake the relevant decision in respect of the first claimant.

On a side note, the court accepted that in cases where the purported victim was present in the territory of a contracting party to Ecat, Ecat could apply even where trafficking took place outside the territory of the contracting state and without any connection to the contracting state for the purposes of criminal jurisdiction.

In cases where the UK government failed to identify someone as a victim of trafficking or provide material support while all the alleged trafficking took place abroad, there could be no breach of article 4 of ECHR which provided for the absolute right to freedom from slavery. The only exception was that the government was aware of circumstances giving rise to a credible suspicion of a real and immediate risk that the individual would be subjected to trafficking in the country to which they would be returned. In the meantime, the positive duty to take operational measures under article 4 of ECHR could arise even where the trafficking was in the past and there was no real and immediate risk of re-trafficking, such that protection might be provided to individuals who on arrival in UK claimed that they had been historical victims of trafficking.

Solicitors: **Duncan Lewis Solicitors; Bindmans LLP; Wilson Solicitors LLP; Deighton Pierce Glynn; Duncan Lewis Solicitors; Treasury Solicitor.**

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FOR I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. Matthew 25.35 (NIV)

Bible verses are provided by the Bible Society

Births

MCBETH on 27th August 2026 to Charlotte Elizabeth (née Coyle) and David, a son, Finn James Stuart, brother to Cathleen Mary.

Deaths

BAKSI Dr Arun Kalyan FRCP died at home on the Isle of Wight on 20th August 2026, aged 87. Much-loved husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle and dear friend, and widely respected physician and campaigner for NHS reform.

WROUGHTON
Marjorie Anne (née Gisburn) passed away peacefully on 5th August 2026, aged 95, after a short illness. Her funeral is tomorrow, 2nd September, at 11.30am at Bramcote Crematorium in The Reflection Chapel, Stapleford, Nottingham. She will be sadly missed by all who knew her.

Memorial Services

LANCASTER Cara. There will be a memorial service for Cara at St Luke's, Sydney Street, Chelsea, SW3 6NH, at 2pm on Thursday 24th September. Followed by refreshments at the church. All welcome. Contacts: louisa@live.co.uk or michaelthomson142@gmail.com

In Memoriam – Private

GRIMWOOD Toby died on 1st September 1995 in Madagascar. Beloved son of Diana, and the late Nigel, brother of Lucy and Hugo, and uncle of Oscar and Tali. A free spirit so desperately missed.

Court Circular

St James's Palace
31st August, 2026
The Princess Royal this morning visited Whitelink Seafoods Limited, Maxwell Place Industrial Estate, Fraserburgh, and was received by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire (Mr Alexander Manson).

Her Royal Highness this afternoon visited International Fish Canners' factory, Bath Street, Fraserburgh, and was received by Mrs Fiona Kennedy Clark (Deputy Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire).

The Princess Royal later visited Aberdeenshire Bairns' Hoose and was received by Mrs Nicola Bradford (Deputy Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire).

Her Royal Highness afterwards visited Midmar Men's Shed and Community Hall, Midmar, and was received by Mrs Rosemary Walker (Deputy Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire).

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Weather

Today Sunny spells across the south and east, rain and showers in the north and west. Max 23C (73F), min 3C (37F)

Around Britain

Key: b=bright, c=cloud, d=drizzle, pc=partly cloudy du=dull, f=fair, fg=fog, h=hail, m=mist, r=rain, sh=showers, sl=sleet, sn=snow, s=sun, t=thunder *=previous day **=data not available

	Temp C midday yesterday		Rain mm 24 hrs to 5pm yesterday	Sun hr*
Aberdeen	19	PC	21.2	0.0
Aberporth	15	C	5.6	1.5
Anglesey	18	C	1.4	3.4
Aviemore	15	M	1.6	0.0
Barnstaple	18	C	8.6	**
Bedford	20	PC	3.8	**
Belfast	14	D	1.2	0.5
Birmingham	20	C	14.8	**
Bournemouth	22	R	6.4	3.2
Bridlington	21	C	16.2	**
Bristol	22	R	10.6	2.9
Camborne	18	C	5.8	3.8
Cardiff	19	PC	14.2	2.3
Edinburgh	18	PC	3.0	0.2
Eskdalemuir	18	C	3.4	0.7
Glasgow	17	C	13.2	1.3
Hereford	20	C	12.4	**
Herstmonceux	22	C	4.4	1.5
Ipswich	20	C	2.0	3.6
Isle of Man	17	C	1.4	1.4
Isle of Wight	22	C	6.0	**
Jersey	19	C	11.6	2.9
Keswick	17	R	3.4	**
Kinloss	**	**	**	**
Leeds	17	C	11.2	**
Lerwick	14	C	0.0	3.0
Leuchars	20	B	2.4	0.5
Lincoln	20	C	4.4	6.3
Liverpool	18	M	2.2	**
London	22	C	0.0	5.7
Lyneham	20	C	0.2	4.0
Manchester	18	R	9.8	1.6
Margate	20	C	4.2	5.7
Milford Haven	17	PC	6.8	**
Newcastle	18	PC	6.6	**
Nottingham	19	C	19.2	2.6
Orkney	15	C	2.2	**
Oxford	21	S	1.0	**
Plymouth	20	PC	1.2	**
Portland	20	PC	0.2	**
Scilly, St Mary's	19	C	1.8	**
Shoreham	20	PC	3.4	5.2
Shrewsbury	19	C	7.2	2.6
Snowdonia	14	D	10.4	**
Southend	21	PC	1.6	8.3
South Uist	15	PC	1.2	**
Stornoway	13	C	4.4	1.7
Tiree	16	PC	0.0	0.1
Whitehaven	18	PC	3.4	1.3
Wick	15	C	16.4	**
Yeovilton	21	R	1.4	2.8

The world

All readings local midday yesterday

Alicante	31	S	Madeira	27	PC
Amsterdam	20	PC	Madrid	29	S
Athens	30	S	Malaga	26	S
Auckland	16	B	Mallorca	30	PC
Bahrain	39	S	Malta	36	S
Bangkok	31	R	Melbourne	15	PC
Barbados	30	SH	Mexico City	25	PC
Barcelona	29	PC	Miami	32	B
Beijing	30	S	Milan	31	PC
Beirut	**	**	Mombasa	28	B
Belgrade	34	S	Montreal	22	PC
Berlin	23	B	Moscow	18	B
Bermuda	30	PC	Mumbai	31	B
Bordeaux	25	PC	Munich	24	PC
Brussels	20	PC	Nairobi	**	**
Bucharest	30	S	Naples	32	S
Budapest	33	S	New Orleans	31	PC
Buenos Aires	20	S	New York	26	B
Cairo	31	PC	Nice	28	PC
Calcutta	32	B	Nicosia	34	PC
Canberra	19	PC	Oslo	19	PC
Cape Town	17	S	Paris	22	B
Chicago	28	C	Perth	22	PC
Copenhagen	18	B	Prague	20	B
Corfu	33	PC	Reykjavik	14	PC
Delhi	33	PC	Riga	21	PC
Dubai	42	S	Rio de Janeiro	30	PC
Dublin	16	B	Riyadh	43	S
Faro	25	S	Rome	35	S
Florence	29	PC	San Francisco	21	PC
Frankfurt	21	SH	Santiago	18	PC
Geneva	25	S	São Paulo	27	S
Gibraltar	24	S	Seoul	25	R
Helsinki	18	B	Seychelles	29	PC
Hong Kong	29	SH	Singapore	29	B
Honolulu	**	**	St Petersburg	19	PC
Istanbul	26	PC	Stockholm	17	B
Jerusalem	31	PC	Sydney	22	S
Johannesburg	21	S	Tel Aviv	31	PC
Kuala Lumpur	33	PC	Tenerife	29	PC
Kyiv	**	**	Tokyo	26	B
Lanzarote	31	PC	Vancouver	18	B
Las Palmas	28	PC	Venice	31	PC
Lima	22	DU	Vienna	28	S
Lisbon	26	PC	Warsaw	27	S
Los Angeles	27	PC	Washington	29	PC
Luxor	36	S	Zurich	23	PC

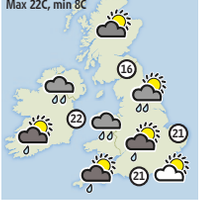
Five days ahead

Unsettled with rain and showers, becoming drier in the south and east by the weekend

Tomorrow

Mostly cloudy with showers or spells of rain. Staying drier in southeastern England and across northern Scotland.

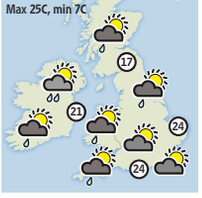
Max 22C, min 8C



Thursday

A mainly cloudy, humid and blustery day with a mixture of sunny intervals and scattered showers. Rain spreading into western areas later and overnight.

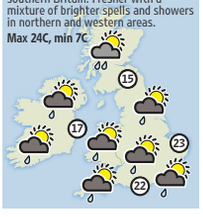
Max 25C, min 7C



Friday

Rather cloudy with a band of patchy rain spreading southwards across southern Britain. Fresher with a mixture of brighter spells and showers in northern and western areas.

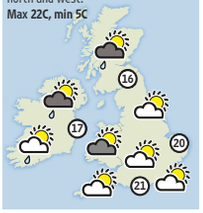
Max 24C, min 7C



Saturday

Staying mainly dry with sunny spells. Cloudier with a few showers in the north and west.

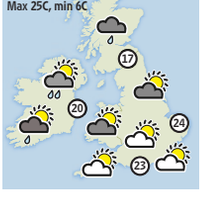
Max 22C, min 5C



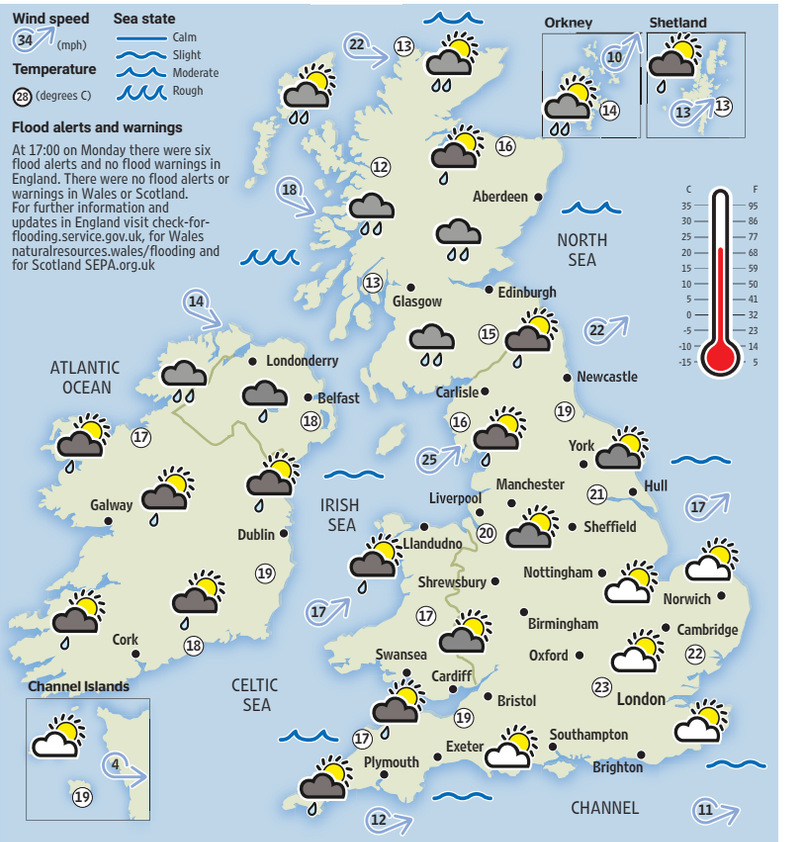
Sunday

Dry and mostly sunny in the south and east. Cloudier with showery rain in Ireland, Scotland and northwestern England.

Max 25C, min 6C



The Times weather page is provided by WeatherQuest



Flood alerts and warnings

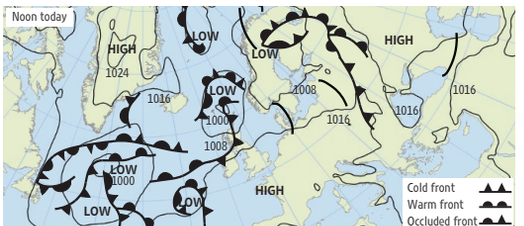
At 17:00 on Monday there were six flood alerts and no flood warnings in England. There were no flood alerts or warnings in Wales or Scotland. For further information and updates in England visit check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk, for Wales naturalresources.wales/flooding and for Scotland SEPA.org.uk

General situation: Showery rain across northern and western areas, drier and brighter in the south and east.
London, SE Eng, E Anglia, E Eng, Channel Is: Staying mainly dry with sunny spells, turning cloudier later with the small chance of an isolated shower. Light to moderate west to southwesterly winds. Maximum 23C (73F), minimum 11C (52F).
Wales, Midlands, Cen S Eng, SW Eng, Cen N Eng, NW Eng: Sunny intervals, but turning rather cloudy at times with a few scattered showers. Light to moderate west to southwesterly winds. Maximum 22C (72F), minimum 10C (50F).
Aberdeen, Cen Highland, Moray Firth, NW Scotland, NE Scotland, N Isles: Cloudy with outbreaks of rain in the morning, brighter with a few showers in the afternoon. Moderate to fresh southwesterly winds, turning westerly later. Maximum 17C (63F), minimum 3C (37F).
NE Eng, Lake District, SW Scotland, IoM, Borders, Edinburgh and Dundee, Glasgow, Argyll, N Ireland: Bright spells and showers before cloud thickens with longer spells of rain later. Moderate to fresh west to southwesterly winds. Maximum 19C (66F), minimum 6C (43F).
Republic of Ireland: Sunny intervals and a few showers in the morning. Turning cloudy with rain spreading in later in the day. Light to moderate southwesterly winds. Maximum 20C (68F), minimum 13C (55F).

Tides

Tidal predictions.
Heights in metres. All times in local time

Today		Ht		Ht
Aberdeen	04:21	4.4	16:54	4.1
Avonmouth	10:34	12.6	22:50	12.6
Belfast	01:53	3.6	14:20	3.3
Cardiff	10:16	11.8	22:34	11.8
Devonport	09:09	5.2	21:21	5.3
Dover	01:55	6.6	14:15	6.8
Dublin	--:--	--	--:--	--
Falmouth	08:26	4.9	20:37	5.1
Greenock	03:31	3.6	15:48	3.4
Harwich	02:56	3.9	14:56	4.0
Holyhead	01:17	5.7	13:38	5.3
Hull	09:30	7.6	21:56	7.1
Leith	05:42	5.6	18:14	5.3
Liverpool	02:04	9.5	14:24	9.1
London Bridge	05:05	6.8	17:18	7.0
Lowestoft	--:--	--	12:42	2.7
Milford Haven	09:27	6.9	21:47	6.9
Morecambe	02:14	9.6	14:35	9.1
Newhaven	02:06	6.6	14:26	6.7
Newquay	08:19	6.8	20:39	6.8
Oban	08:43	3.7	21:11	3.8
Penzance	07:51	5.3	20:10	5.4
Portsmouth	02:21	4.6	14:52	4.6
Shoreham	02:10	6.2	14:31	6.2
Southampton	01:58	4.6	14:24	4.6
Swansea	09:32	9.1	21:50	9.2
Tees	06:40	5.6	19:17	5.3
Weymouth	09:58	1.9	22:12	2.0



Synoptic situation

High pressure situated to the south of Britain will lead to a largely dry, settled day across much of England and Wales. Low pressure will move north of Scotland with a cold front spreading cloud and rain southwards across Scotland into northern parts of England and Ireland. Another low will approach Ireland bringing showery rain there later.

Highs and lows

24hrs to 5pm yesterday
Warmest: Teddington Bushy Park, London, 24.5C
Coldest: Shap, Cumbria, 6.2C
Wettest: Inverbervie, 44.6mm
Sunniest: Shoeburyness, Essex, 8.3hrs*

Sun and moon

For Greenwich
Sun rises: 06.12
Sun sets: 19.47
Moon rises: 20.50
Moon sets: 13.00 Wed
Third quarter: September 4

Hours of darkness

Aberdeen	20:36-05:42
Belfast	20:46-06:03
Birmingham	20:26-05:50
Cardiff	20:29-05:57
Exeter	20:29-05:59
Glasgow	20:42-05:53
Liverpool	20:32-05:53
London	20:17-05:45
Manchester	20:29-05:50
Newcastle	20:29-05:45
Norwich	20:13-05:37
Penzance	20:37-06:08
Sheffield	20:26-05:47

Weather Eye

Paul Simons

"September dries up ditches or breaks down bridges" goes an old weather saying, summing up the two-sided nature of the month, one that can blow hot and cold, dry and wet, blustery and calm. On the one hand, a regular procession of depressions can sweep off the Atlantic with wind and rain. Or the influence of anticyclones can bring about an altogether more mellow character much like summer — dry, sunny and warm, although prone to cool nights and autumn mists. As the American writer Rowland Evans Robinson described in *September Days* (1896): "September days have the warmth of summer in their briefer hours, but in their lengthening evenings a prophetic breath of autumn."

As for this September, it looks like carrying on from where the end of August left off — wet and breezy with brief spells of drier, sunnier interludes. But then the rain is sorely needed for the drought areas of England and Wales.

"Rain, rain welcome back/ We've missed your song/ Your splatter and smack/ On our dusty brown clay, dry so long." (Michael P Garofalo, Valley Spirit Journal, 2004)

Trying to predict the latter half of this month is literally up in the air. However, longer-range forecasts are suggesting conditions may be mild thanks to the warm seas around the UK and the impacts of the rising temperatures across the globe.

Perhaps the most dramatic transition of any September was in 1919, which began with a heatwave that hit 32C (90F) on September 11, the highest temperature of the year. The Times reported men in London unbuttoned their waistcoats and women wore summer dresses, while open-air pools did brisk business. And then an Arctic wind sent temperatures plunging, and on September 20 much of Britain appeared to be in the depths of winter. Scotland, northern England, much of Wales and the West Country were covered in snow several inches thick. This was the earliest date that snow has been recorded in autumn in England.

Speak directly to one of our forecasters on 09065 777675

8am to 5pm daily (calls are charged at £1.55 plus network extras)

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Sport

Leading rider Loughnane booked for Constitution Hill's acid test at Kempton

Rob Wright Racing Editor

Constitution Hill faces the biggest test of his fledgling Flat career in the group three William Hill September Stakes at Kempton Park on Saturday but he will have plenty of assistance from the saddle, with this year's leading jockey, Billy Loughnane, taking the mount on Nicky Henderson's stable star for the first time.

The entries for the race were made yesterday, with 13 potential rivals to Constitution Hill headed by the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe hopeful Gethin and Coronation Cup winner Bay City Roller. Winner of the 2023 Champion Hurdle, Constitution Hill fell on three of his final four starts over jumps and has been switched to the Flat, winning two minor races in good style.

This is the acid test as to whether the nine-year-old can cut it at a higher level in this sphere, though, and with his two previous Flat jockeys — Ryan Moore and Oisin Murphy — both unavailable, Henderson has called on Loughnane, 20, who has had a breakthrough year with 176 winners already. "Billy's name came up and he's available at Kempton and that's great," Henderson told Racing Post. "He's having a great season but there are stacks of them that would have done for me and if I had more Flat horses I'd use them all."

The race sponsors believe that Constitution Hill has his work cut out, offering him at 8-1. Gethin is the 2-1 favourite, followed by Pride Of Arras at 3-1 and Bay City Roller at 9-2.

Ripon

Rob Wright

2.10 His Finest Hour
2.40 Empress Princess
3.10 Star People
3.40 Kind Touch
4.13 Here Forever
4.48 Hopeful Joy
5.18 Regally Blonde

Going: good to soft — **Sky Sports Racing**
Draw: 5f-6f, high numbers best

2.10 Handicap (£4,711: 1m 2f) (8)

1 (2) 11100 **POET'S DAWN** 10 (P,CD) T Easterby 11-10-0 **J Dickson (5)**
2 (7) -0434 **TRIPLE FORCE** 66 (P,D) Craig Lidster 5-9-13 **A Jary**
3 (3) 62-32 **HIS FINEST HOUR** 17 (D) Miss T Jackson 5-9-12 **W Fentiman**
4 (6) 51226 **YERMANTHERE** 8 (CD) T Easterby 8-9-11 **R Elliott (3)**
5 (4) 50306 **NO KNEE NEVER** 20 (P,T) James Owen 5-9-9 **S C Cronin**
6 (8) 53005 **DRAUPNIR** 24 M & D Easterby 4-9-9 **S Farmer (3)**
7 (1) 66441 **COSMOS RAJ** 10 (CD) D O'Meara 8-9-7 **C Whiteley (3)**
8 (5) 3-000 **PRECIOUS SPARTAN** 22 (C) P Neville 4-9-1 **C Horgan (3)**

9-4 His Finest Hour, 10-3 Cosmos Raj, 5-1 Yermanthere, 6-1 Draupnir, 15-2 Triple Force, 10-1 No Knee Never, 16-1 Poet's Dawn, 20-1 Precious Spartan.

Rob Wright's choice: His Finest Hour has been placed on his past two starts here **Dangers:** No Knee Never, Poet's Dawn

2.40 Novice Stakes (2-Y-O: £5,757: 5f) (7)

1 (5) 204 **AMERICAN PSYCHO** 38 A Watson 9-7 **P-L Jamin**
2 (1) **CATAVEGA** M & D Easterby 9-7 **B Garritty**
3 (4) 55 **WALT** 66 D Loughnane 9-7 **R Scott**
4 (6) 54 **CLASSYFIED** 8 T Easterby 9-2 **D Allan**
5 (7) 2 **EMPRESS PRINCESS** 19 J Tate 9-2 **D Tudhope**
6 (3) **KUMHARAS** R & P Fahey 9-2 **Oisin Orr**
7 (2) 00 **THE RESDEV ROMAN** 94 M & D Easterby 9-2 **J Mason**

7-4 Empress Princess, 5-2 Kumharas, 7-2 American Psycho, 13-2 Classyfied, 16-1 The Resdev Roman, 25-1 Walt, Catavega.

Wright choice: Empress Princess can build on a promising second on her debut at Beverley **Danger:** Kumharas

3.10 Nursery (2-Y-O: £4,711: 5f) (6)

1 (5) 63110 **LADY DUBLIN** 31 (P) O Pears 9-9 **H Russell**
2 (2) 05232 **STAR PEOPLE** 12 (B,BF) J & S Quinn 9-8 **J Hart**
3 (4) 221 **LEXINGTON BOOM** 20 (D) G Tuer 9-6 **O Stammers**
4 (3) 65431 **ROMAN CRYSTAL** 24 M & D Easterby 9-4 **B Garritty**
5 (6) 23106 **MAY BEE IN PROFIT** 12 (D) T Easterby 9-4 **D Allan**
6 (1) 44 **INCA WARRIOR** 45 N Tinkler 9-2 **R Scott**

13-8 Star People, 3-1 Lexington Boom, 7-2 Roman Crystal, 6-1 Lady Dublin, 12-1 Inca Warrior, 16-1 May Bee In Profit.

Wright choice: Star People failed by just a nose at Newcastle last time; solid claims **Danger:** Lexington Boom

3.40 Handicap (£6,281: 6f) (10)

1 (10) 22052 **YES I'M MALI** 4 (D) D O'Meara 4-10-1 **D Tudhope**
2 (6) -3210 **TOP JUGGLER** 21 (BF,D) S Spencer 4-9-13 **D Swift**
3 (5) 2-304 **KIND TOUCH** 52 (BF,C) R & P Fahey 3-9-12 **O Orr**
4 (8) 61500 **REIGNING PROFIT** 16 (C) R Carr 7-9-12 **JP Sullivan**
5 (9) 66240 **ARDUIS INVICTA** 34 Craig Lidster 3-9-10 **T Eaves**
6 (4) 01600 **CHARLIE MASON** 34 (D) A Carroll 5-9-8 **C Rodriguez**
7 (7) 45460 **ANAISA** 17 (T,CD) T Easterby 3-9-7 **D Allan**
8 (3) 65004 **SECRET GUEST** 17 (D) B Smart 6-9-6 **P Mulrennan**
9 (1) 02226 **ANOTHER INVESTMENT** 21 (D) N Tinkler 7-9-5 **A Jary (3)**
10 (2) 33022 **SPIRIT OF APPLAUSE** 10 (B,CD) T Easterby 6-9-3 **S B Kirrane**

2-1 Yes I'm Mali, 3-1 Spirit Of Applause, 5-1 Top Juggler, 6-1 Kind Touch, 12-1 Another Investment, 14-1 Reigning Profit, Secret Guest, 25-1 others.

Wright choice: Kind Touch won on his only previous start here; unexposed **Dangers:** Yes I'm Mali, Top Juggler

4.13 Handicap (£6,281: 6f) (10)

1 (1) 66342 **ALMARADA PRINCE** 39 (D) P Midgley 5-10-0 **D Nolan**
2 (5) 00000 **VENTURE CAPITAL** 31 (P,C,D) K Ryan 5-9-13 **S Gray**
3 (4) -3045 **GOYARD** 21 (T,CD) D O'Meara 4-9-11 **D Tudhope**
4 (8) 1-045 **HERE FOREVER** 57 (CD) D & N Barron 3-9-10 **C Beasley**
5 (9) 21262 **FARANDAWAY** 10 (BF,D) G Tuer 4-9-8 **O Stammers**
6 (6) 00500 **WOBWOBWOB** 11 (B,T,D) A Keatley 8-9-7 **MP Sheehy**
7 (2) 20055 **MISTER SOX** 17 (B,CD) T Easterby 6-9-6 **S B Kirrane**
8 (7) 00200 **FORTAMOUR** 39 (CD) B Haslam 10-9-6 **P Mulrennan**
9 (10) 46040 **FIRST FOLIO** 17 (V,D) J Camacho 8-9-5 **R Sexton**
10 (3) 0-030 **EDUCATING RITA** 17 (D) P Kirby 4-9-2 **C Hardie**

11-4 Almarada Prince, 7-2 Farandaway, 6-1 Goyard, Mister Sox, 8-1 Venture Capital, Here Forever, 10-1 First Folio, 20-1 others.

Wright choice: Here Forever shaped well when fifth in a big field at Ayr; fairly treated **Dangers:** Almarada Prince, Goyard

4.48 Handicap (£4,711: 1m) (13)

1 (8) 54233 **GARDEN OASIS** 17 (B,CD) T Easterby 11-10-0 **D Allan**
2 (5) 14443 **DONNA NOOK** 18 (T,V,CD) D O'Meara 4-10-0 **D Tudhope**
3 (9) 2-521 **CATTON LADY** 22 (D) M & D Easterby 5-9-13 **J Mason**
4 (3) 03013 **KISS ME MY LOVE** 26 (D) Roger Fell 4-9-11 **K Stott**
5 (1) 55210 **BELLASIO** 42 (D) G Tuer 5-9-8 **O Stammers**
6 (13) 21020 **THORNABY ANNIE** 34 (H,D) Adrian Nicholls 3-9-7 **J Nicholls (3)**
7 (4) 3-005 **HOPEFUL JOY** 57 M Walford 4-9-7 **J Garritty**
8 (10) 22604 **MILFORD GRANGE** 24 M & D Easterby 3-9-5 **B Garritty**
9 (11) 46126 **PARODA DIVA** 22 (P,D) P Neville 3-9-4 **A Mullen**
10 (7) -0040 **ZERMATT STAR** 26 (P) T Coyle & K Wood 3-9-4 **D Nolan**
11 (12) 40-00 **G'EMMETHEGREENLITE** 13 (T) S Spencer 3-9-4 **D Swift**
12 (6) 21146 **GUNALT WAVELENGTH** 38 (C) M & D Easterby 3-9-3 **S Farmer (5)**
13 (2) 11303 **PENNY GHENT** 34 (B,CD) S Whitaker 6-9-2 **R Elliott (5)**

7-2 Catton Lady, 5-1 Garden Oasis, 11-2 Kiss Me My Love, 13-2 Donna Nook, 10-1 Paroda Diva, Milford Grange, Penny Ghent, 12-1 others.

Wright choice: Hopeful Joy did not get a clear run when fifth here last time **Dangers:** Donna Nook, Milford Grange

5.18 Handicap (£3,664: 2m) (7)

1 (6) -0342 **TWILIGHT SAFARI** 39 M Hammond 4-10-2 **A Brookes**
2 (5) -6236 **ZIMMERMAN** 85 (P,T,D) T Easterby 7-10-0 **D Allan**
3 (2) 2115- **BOLLIN NEIL** J223 (P,T,BF,D) T Easterby 10-9-12 **J Dickson (5)**
4 (4) P-434 **DEREHAM** 24 (D) J Berry 10-9-5 **M Keegan-Price (7)**
5 (7) -0521 **FEMME FATALE** 24 (H,D) J Tate 3-9-4 **D Tudhope**
6 (3) 63451 **REGALLY BLONDE** 15 (B,CD) B Case 7-9-4 **J Nicholls (3)**
7 (1) 06135 **SI WHITE** 24 (V,BF) Sir M Prescott 3-9-2 **D E Hogan**

11-4 Femme Fatale, 3-1 Si White, 7-2 Twilight Safari, 5-1 Regally Blonde, 8-1 Dereham, 12-1 Zimmerman, 14-1 Bollin Neil.

Wright choice: Regally Blonde is 6lb lower in the weights that when winning this a year ago **Danger:** Dereham

Brighton

Rob Wright

4.06 Beach Partee
4.36 Norfolk Blue
5.06 Quite Sweet
5.40 Gretna Dreams
6.15 King David
6.45 Tattie Bogle
7.15 Bona Fortuna

Going: good, good to soft in places
Draw: no advantage — **Sky Sports Racing**

4.06 Handicap (3-Y-O: £4,187: 5f) (6)

1 (5) -4202 **LONDON IS BLUE** 17 (P,CD) R Cowell 9-9 **M Ghiani**
2 (1) 60255 **LOLEETA** 24 (D) S C Williams 9-3 **C R Lyons (7)**
3 (3) 44233 **HAVANA JAG** 27 (P) J Gallagher 8-9 **L Wright (3)**
4 (4) 44203 **BEACH PARTEE** 8 (V,C,D) S Dixon 8-7 **K O'Neill**
5 (6) 24213 **MY MATE MACKLEY** 18 (P,D) Adam Kirby 8-5 **T Heard**
6 (2) 0-652 **SHINING GUEST** 27 G Margarson 8-4 **S De Sousa**

11-4 Shining Guest, 7-2 My Mate Mackley, Beach Partee, 4-1 others.

4.36 Maiden Stakes (£4,187: 7f) (4)

1 (1) 42525 **NORFOLK BLUE** 24 (P,BF) W Knight 3-9-7 **M Ghiani**
2 (2) 04 **INSPECTRE** 15 G & J Moore 3-9-5 **D Keenan**
3 (3) 43 **MUCHACHO** 75 (P) H Kobeissi 3-9-5 **S De Sousa**
4 (4) 0-03 **TWILIGHT BABY** 44 G Kelleway 3-9-0 **S Osborne**

11-10 Norfolk Blue, 3-1 Inspectre, 4-1 Muchacho, 5-1 Twilight Baby.

5.06 Handicap (£3,454: 1m 2f) (10)

1 (8) 44-02 **MAKES ME WONDER** 17 D M Simcock 4-9-9 **T Langley (5)**
2 (2) 465-2 **JENSON BENSON** 31 (P,D) S Lycett 8-9-6 **G Mangan**
3 (9) -6004 **QUITE SWEET** 27 A Carroll 4-9-5 **W Carson**
4 (6) 30-55 **SANGARA** 8 (H) Miss S West 4-9-2 **G Bass**
5 (3) -0005 **DELEVINGNE DREAM** 14 (P) Harry Eustace 3-9-2 **G Wood**
6 (5) 04044 **OH SO AUDACIOUS** 18 (P,C) Jack Jones 7-9-0 **S Osborne**
7 (4) -2046 **THUNDERING BREEZE** 25 G & J Moore 5-9-0 **F Marsh**
8 (1) 06446 **TWILIGHT GUEST** 35 (P,CD) G Margarson 6-9-0 **S De Sousa**
9 (10) 05430 **ALL ABOUT GEORGE** 18 (V) Kieran Burke 4-9-0 **J Gordon**
10 (7) 00500 **MARYLAND STAR** 5 (H) D Ivory 3-8-8 **K O'Neill**

9-4 Jenson Benson, 7-2 Oh So Audacious, 9-2 Makes Me Wonder, 15-2 Thundering Breeze, 10-1 All About George, 12-1 others.

5.40 Handicap (£3,454: 1m 4f) (8)

1 (7) -0B36 **GRETNA DREAMS** 18 (C) S C Williams 4-9-9 **H Vigors (5)**
2 (8) /5-60 **BUG BOY** 48 (CD) A Newcombe 10-9-8 **T Langley (5)**
3 (2) 03210 **FOINIX** 14 (B,CD) J & S Best 6-9-6 **F Marsh**
4 (3) 21333 **HIGHLAND HARVEY** 9 (BF) Gihan Arnolda 4-9-6 **D Keenan**
5 (4) 14614 **CLIPSHAM NOBLE** 23 (P,C,D) Charlie Clover 4-9-5 **L Wright (3)**
6 (1) 0-233 **LA TRINITE** 35 N King 4-9-2 **C Bishop**
7 (6) 00052 **FITZMAURICE** 25 A Carroll 4-9-0 **S De Sousa**
8 (5) 446 **WINSTON'S OATH** 19 (B) James Owen 4-9-0 **G Wood**

11-4 Highland Harvey, 4-1 Clipsham Noble, 5-1 La Trinite, 6-1 others.

6.15 Handicap (£3,454: 1m) (9)

1 (7) 00052 **KING DAVID** 8 (B) G Kelleway 5-9-9 **S Osborne**
2 (8) 41133 **SHES GOT THE BLUES** 25 (BF,C) A Carroll 3-9-6 **S De Sousa**
3 (4) 04310 **LETSBEATSEPSIS** 18 (P,BF) G & J Moore 4-9-6 **R Clutterbuck**
4 (9) -0540 **AVISPADO** 59 (H) D Menuisier 3-9-5 **J Doughty**
5 (2) 35360 **THE SPOTLIGHT KID** 16 (B,D) D Ivory 7-9-5 **K O'Neill**
6 (6) 0-006 **JAMES PARK WOODS** 80 (CD) D F Davis 10-9-4 **B Ffrench-Davis (5)**
7 (1) 50536 **TURPIN** 14 (P) J Boyle 4-9-3 **L Wright (3)**
8 (3) 54203 **RAINBOW SIGN** 27 (T,CD) M Pattinson 8-9-3 **T Heard**
9 (5) 00664 **ROCK MASTER** 26 A Carroll 4-9-1 **M Ghiani**

11-4 King David, 7-2 Shes Got The Blues, 9-2 Letsbeatsepsis, 6-1 Rainbow Sign, 8-1 Turpin, 12-1 Avispado, 14-1 others.

6.45 Handicap (£4,187: 7f) (6)

1 (3) 56211 **SERENITY DREAM** 26 (P,CD) A Carroll 5-10-0 **J Doughty**
2 (2) 13020 **DION BAKER** 9 (P,CD) M Wigham 7-9-13 **D Keenan**
3 (4) 20220 **TATTIE BOGLE** 20 (P,D) C Johnston 4-9-13 **M Ghiani**
4 (5) 03004 **SHAW PARK** 14 (CD) S Dixon 7-9-7 **K O'Neill**
5 (1) 60154 **STATION BAR** 28 (P) E J-Houghton 3-9-2 **C Bishop**
6 (6) 3-003 **FAI FAI** 84 (T,BF) D Steele 7-8-9 **H Vigors (5)**

6-4 Serenity Dream, 4-1 Dion Baker, 5-1 Tattie Bogle, 13-2 others.

7.15 Handicap (£4,187: 5f) (6)

1 (6) 226-6 **BONA FORTUNA** 25 (T,C) M Appleby 5-9-9 **F Marsh**
2 (4) 23131 **MR COOL** 10 C Johnston 4-9-5 **M Ghiani**
3 (1) -0120 **ANCIENT TIMES** 25 (T,D) Harry Eustace 8-9-1 **G Wood**
4 (5) 023/0 **CRYPTO QUEST** 5 (D) S Dixon 7-8-13 **K O'Neill**
5 (3) 200-6 **POP DANCER** 27 (CD) A Carroll 9-8-7 **S De Sousa**
6 (2) 36212 **DIOMED SPIRIT** 9 (CD) C Gordon 6-8-6 **S Osborne**

13-8 Diomed Spirit, 5-2 Mr Cool, 6-1 Bona Fortuna, 7-1 others.

Lingfield Park

Rob Wright

2.20 Divot
2.50 Frantic
3.20 Reader
3.50 Dontspoilasale
4.20 Celestarak
4.55 Musical Soldier
5.25 Far Too Fizzy

Going: standard — **Sky Sports Racing**
Draw: no advantage

2.20 Amateur Jockeys' Handicap (£3,080: 1m 2f) (10)

1 (8) 03324 **BOWNDER** 8 (CD) J Portman 4-11-2 **Mr F Tett**
2 (4) 50113 **DIVOT** 18 (D) W Knight 4-11-2 **Mr H Callan**
3 (2) 62556 **KURIOS LADY** 22 M Madgwick 4-11-1 **Mr F Yarham**
4 (10) -0004 **NORFLONDONFOREVER** 26 Faye Bramley 5-11-0 **Mr J Hills (5)**
5 (9) 02300 **IMPERIAL DECISION** 20 (P,T) Kieran Burke 4-10-13 **Mr L Burke (7)**
6 (7) 00021 **ALAZWAR** 35 (D) A Watson 8-10-10 **Miss B Hampson**
7 (3) 54-04 **WARRNAMBOOL** 12 (V) N Littmoden 4-10-3 **Miss G Littmoden (5)**
8 (5) 52431 **WRIST ART** 9 (P,T) James Owen 9-10-3(4ex) **Miss R Criscuolo (5)**
9 (1) 32546 **LITTLE SHE** 9 (P,T) M Tregoning 4-9-13 **Miss A Tregoning (5)**
10 (6) U6545 **THE PUG** 9 (B,CD) O Murphy 6-9-11 **Miss J Stewart (7)**

9-4 Divot, 7-2 Wrist Art, 11-2 Alazwar, 15-2 Bownder, 10-1 others.

2.50 Novice Stakes (£5,400: 6f) (4)

1 (2) 3-1 **STORM FORCE** 16 (D) R & P Fahey 3-9-11 **J Doyle**
2 (1) 0 **BLAZING GADEN** 16 D J Jeffreys 5-9-6 **D Costello**
3 (3) 33-35 **GOLD STAR GAZING** 61 (T,V,BF) J Fanshawe 3-9-4 **K Fraser**
4 (4) -2205 **FRANTIC** 59 (BF) E Walker 3-8-13 **T Marquand**

11-10 Storm Force, 9-4 Frantic, 5-2 Gold Star Gazing, 66-1 Blazing Gaden.

3.20 Maiden Stakes (£5,400: 7f) (7)

1 (1) 542 **NOTHING BUT LOVE** 26 (H) Dr J Scargill 4-9-6 **C Hutchinson**
2 (2) 64000 **MIRAFLORES** 14 R Cook & J Bridger 4-9-4 **Taylor Fisher**
3 (7) 20504 **DUSK DAMSEL** 15 J S Moore 3-9-2 **M Wonnacott (5)**
4 (6) 0 **AU POINT** 15 M Bell 3-9-0 **C Shepherd**
5 (3) 64 **FOR EVER HOPEFULL** 40 J R Jenkins 3-9-0 **J Peate**
6 (5) 04 **GARTH SPIRIT** 38 (V) R L Llewellyn 3-9-0 **R Kavanagh (3)**
7 (4) 20-33 **READER** 11 (P) M Tregoning 3-9-0 **R Hornby**

7-4 Reader, 9-4 Nothing But Love, 9-2 For Ever Hopefull, 11-2 others.

3.50 Handicap (£3,245: 5f) (6)

1 (2) 60660 **DONTSPOILASALE** 12 (D) J & S Best 6-9-9 **T P Queally**
2 (6) 44550 **NO RETURN** 15 C Johnston 4-9-8 **C Shepherd**
3 (3) 03610 **ELVETHAM** 19 (B,BF,C) C Allen 4-9-6 **T Marquand**
4 (4) -U410 **FLETCHER'S FLIGHT** 78 (P,D) C Wallis 6-9-4 **R Hornby**
5 (1) 64360 **MART** 12 (B,T,C,D) D Donovan 5-8-9 **R Kavanagh (3)**
6 (5) 604-5 **LOCHABER** 7 (B,D) S Dixon 5-8-4 **I Chalmers (7)**

5-2 Elvetham, 4-1 Mart, Fletcher's Flight, 5-1 Dontspoilasale, 6-1 others.

4.20 Handicap (£3,978: 1m 5f) (5)

1 (3) /4111 **HOPE RISING** 14 J Snowden 5-9-12 **R Hornby**
2 (1) 03644 **PERCY JONES** 14 M Loughnane 7-9-12 **P Bradley**
3 (5) 50221 **LA PEREGRINA** 31 E Walker 3-9-7 **T Marquand**
4 (2) 0-015 **CELESTARAK** 54 (H,BF) D Menuisier 3-9-5 **M Paetel (3)**
5 (4) -2263 **ST HILDA** 13 M Tregoning 3-9-4 **D Costello**

6-5 Hope Rising, 6-4 La Peregrina, 8-1 St Hilda, Celestarak, 14-1 Percy Jones.

4.55 Handicap (3-Y-O: £3,245: 1m) (5)

1 (5) 22111 **MUSICAL SOLDIER** 7 (P,T,C) Ollie Sangster 9-11(6ex) **S D Bowen**
2 (1) 20460 **PARANJAPE** 12 (P) S Woods 9-9 **J Callan**
3 (2) 050 **HEIR OF AMBITION** 50 Harry Eustace 9-6 **K Fraser**
4 (4) 02456 **AHEAD OF FASHION** 16 D F Davis 9-4 **R Hornby**
5 (3) -6004 **LAUGHTERINTHERAIN** 28 E Walker 9-4 **T Marquand**

8-13 Musical Soldier, 9-2 Ahead Of Fashion, 11-2 Laughterintherain, 12-1 Paranjape, Heir Of Ambition.

5.25 Handicap (£3,245: 6f) (8)

1 (7) 00044 **HORACE WALLACE** 24 (V,D) R & P Fahey 3-9-10 **J F Egan**
2 (1) 1-006 **SARAFINA MSHAIRI** 26 (D) E Smyth-Osbourne 4-9-9 **R Hornby**
3 (6) 35402 **FAR TOO FIZZY** 17 (CD) D Loughnane 3-9-9 **L Pearson**
4 (5) 42300 **PHOENIX MOON** 40 (CD) D Coakley 5-9-8 **T Marquand**
5 (3) 64041 **BALON D'OR** 14 (P,CD) S Dow 5-9-8 **P Bradley**
6 (8) -5544 **BESSIE WALLIS** 15 (H,C) M Attwater 3-9-7 **K Fox**
7 (2) 32032 **LAHINA BAY** 19 (CD) R Cook & J Bridger 6-9-4 **T Fisher**
8 (4) 62445 **MISTER MOET** 12 (P,CD) S Dixon 3-9-1 **C Shepherd**

11-4 Balon D'Or, 3-1 Far Too Fizzy, 10-3 Lahina Bay, 7-1 others.

Wolverhampton

Rob Wright

4.42 R P McMurphy
5.12 Jessica (nb)
5.45 Media Legend (nap)
6.20 Knowledge
6.55 Midnight Media
7.30 She's A Gift
8.00 Rye
8.30 Bulldog Spirit

Going: standard — **Sky Sports Racing**
Draw: 5f-7f, low numbers best

4.42 Handicap (£3,245: 7f) (9)

1 (1) 04620 **VELVET SKIES** 22 (D) Mr W G Harrison 5-9-9 **E Tindall (3)**
2 (2) 31003 **R P MCMURPHY** 33 (P,C) M Appleby 4-9-7 **J Maher (7)**
3 (4) 52650 **FEDERAL ENVOY** 16 (V,D) Charlie Clover 5-9-6 **D J Murphy (5)**
4 (9) 01060 **COURT OF SESSION** 14 (V,CD) P McEntee 7-9-5 **C Planas**
5 (8) 0-003 **RENEWABLE DREAM** 13 J Wainwright 4-9-5 **G Sanna (3)**
6 (5) 33212 **NUTCRACKER** 50 (BF,C) A Carroll 4-9-5 **M Coppins (5)**
7 (6) 40105 **MYTHICAL ISLE** 33 (CD) P Morris 4-9-1 **A Lewis**
8 (7) 54636 **MINTANA** 56 (P,C,D) H Evans 6-8-10 **T Kiely-Marshall**
9 (3) 0-053 **OUR NICOLA** 13 D & N Barron 4-8-9 **W Pyle**

5-2 Nutcracker, 4-1 R P Mcmurphy, 5-1 Renewable Dream, 15-2 others.

5.12 Novice Stakes (2-Y-O: £7,020: 7f) (10)

1 (10) 0 **APPASSIONATA** 12 Sir M Prescott 9-2 **L Morris**
2 (7) 65 **CASABLANCA DREAM** 10 M Botti 9-2 **L Catton (3)**
3 (8) **COWGIRL** J & S Quinn 9-2 **R Dawson**
4 (5) 02 **IRIS OLIVIA** 55 K P De Foy 9-2 **R Ryan**
5 (3) 52 **JESSICA** 11 K P De Foy 9-2 **D Egan**
6 (1) 60 **MODA ROSA** 27 B Meehan 9-2 **P Dobbs**
7 (9) 40 **NIGHTSPELL** 14 (H) R Burdon 9-2 **W Carver**
8 (2) 33 **PHALANX NATION** 97 (H,T,BF) A Watson 9-2 **B Loughnane**
9 (6) **PORT ELEONORA** J Candlish 9-2 **L Edmunds**
10 (4) 06 **SPEED NATION** 20 S & E Crisford 9-2 **H Davies**

5-2 Phalanx Nation, 11-4 Jessica, 7-2 Iris Olivia, 15-2 others.

5.45 Handicap (£3,978: 1m 1f) (6)

1 (4) 23-53 **MEDIA LEGEND** 18 Harry Charlton 3-9-10 **L Edmunds**
2 (6) 34420 **FOREST CAPER** 189 D O'Meara 5-9-10 **C Fallon**
3 (2) 22005 **SHOWCASING STAR** 52 C Johnston 3-9-8 **R Ryan**
4 (5) 3-364 **NORMAN INVASION** 54 (H) E Walker 3-9-8 **A Lewis (3)**
5 (1) -3234 **HAMDA'S JOY** 17 Tom Clover 3-9-6 **D Egan**
6 (3) 56466 **MASTER OF ENTROPY** 37 (T) J & S Quinn 3-9-2 **B Loughnane**

2-1 Norman Invasion, 11-4 Media Legend, 5-1 Hamda's Joy, 13-2 others.

6.20 Handicap (3-Y-O: £3,978: 1m 1f 105yd) (6)

1 (2) 43124 **BOOZIEBRUNCH** 19 (B,BF) S Woods 9-9 **C Fallon**
2 (5) 15005 **KNOWLEDGE** 50 (V) S & E Crisford 9-8 **H Davies**
3 (6) 4616 **LUCKY LUNA** 36 R Hannon 9-7 **P Dobbs**
4 (4) 13603 **SILKEN BAY** 34 (H) Dr R Newland 9-7 **R Ryan**
5 (3) 2-34 **VARIETY ACT** 195 Sir M Prescott 9-5 **L Morris**
6 (1) -1600 **LUX AETERNA** 57 (B,CD) E Dunlop 9-1 **D Egan**

2-1 Variety Act, 11-4 Booziebrunch, 9-2 others.

6.55 Handicap (£3,978: 1m 1f 105yd) (10)

1 (7) 05533 **STERLING FORTUNE** 22 J Tate 3-9-9 **L Morris**
2 (9) -2303 **POOR RELATION** 45 Ollie Sangster 3-9-7 **C Fallon**
3 (1) 4-024 **PIPILY** 17 (P) T Kent 3-9-5 **R Dawson**
4 (3) 640-0 **BUN BANG FAI** 33 M Hammond 4-9-5 **A Lewis (3)**
5 (5) 4440 **KHEPRI** 14 (V) K R Burke 3-9-4 **C Lee**
6 (8) 02121 **MIDNIGHT MEDIA** 21 (CD) W Muir & C Grassick 3-9-4 **L Edmunds**
7 (10) 4-551 **PERFECT RULER** 14 M Botti 3-9-4 **D Egan**
8 (6) 05642 **MELTING SNOW** 30 (P) E Dunlop 3-9-3 **B Loughnane**
9 (4) 50050 **MAGIC RUNNER** 17 (CD) R Carr 4-9-1 **R Ryan**
10 (2) 0-55 **MISS MALONE TO YOU** 76 (W,T) Kerry Lee 3-8-12 **R Havlin**

11-4 Midnight Media, 4-1 Perfect Ruler, 9-2 Melting Snow, 5-1 others.

7.30 Handicap (£3,245: 5f) (9)

1 (3) 00035 **MASTER DANDY** 42 (P,CD) Daisy Hitchins 6-9-9 **L Morris**
2 (5) 00104 **THE FIXER** 4 (CD) S Dixon 5-9-9 **C Howarth (3)**
3 (7) 03530 **HENERY HAWK** 22 (CD) Miss L Perratt 7-9-8 **T Kiely-Marshall (5)**
4 (8) 0030 **SHEIK YERBOUTI** 20 G Harris 5-9-8 **A Lewis (3)**
5 (9) 00202 **SHE'S A GIFT** 57 (T) J McConnell (Ire) 4-9-7 **R Ryan**
6 (4) 000-0 **BALLSGROVE BOY** 40 (P,C) P Chapple-Hyam 4-9-7 **H Davies**
7 (1) 44231 **DORALEE** 24 (D) D & N Barron 5-9-5 **W Pyle**
8 (2) 0-030 **MACANUDO** 23 (B,D) I Williams 5-9-5 **B Loughnane**
9 (6) 36000 **GLOBAL EFFORT** 19 (T,V,CD) P McEntee 6-8-11 **G McEntee**

5-2 She's A Gift, 3-1 Doralee, 5-1 The Fixer, 13-2 Master Dandy, 8-1 others.

8.00 Handicap (£4,711: 6f) (11)

1 (1) -4506 **IN THE CITY** 15 (V) W Greatrex 4-9-9 **E Greatrex**
2 (4) 55656 **FOREVER MY PRINCE** 70 (D) M Blake 4-9-8 **B Loughnane**
3 (3) U1423 **CHASING GOLD** 14 (B,D) Michael Keady 4-9-8 **L Morris**
4 (2) 30005 **EXPRESS TRAIN** 14 (D) R Phillips 4-9-7 **R Havlin**
5 (5) 32426 **RYE** 88 (P,BF) A Carroll 4-9-7 **R Ryan**
6 (10) 05630 **BLACKJACK** 16 (B,D) A Brown 9-9-6 **R Dawson**
7 (6) 02100 **PHIL'S DREAM** 59 (T,V,C) J McConnell (Ire) 6-9-3 **C Lee**
8 (9) 23005 **MISTER MCGREGOR** 15 (B,E) M Mullineaux 4-8-9 **F McManoman**
9 (7) 000-0 **PIDDIE'S PEARL** 108 (H) K Frost 4-8-9 **W Pyle**
10 (11) 00060 **SHE WENT WHOOSH** 15 (P,T) S Dixon 4-8-9 **W Cox**
11 (8) 000-0 **ROYAL JUSTICE** 5 (B) S Dixon 5-8-9 **O Haines (7)**

11-4 Rye, 3-1 Chasing Gold, 5-1 In The City, 11-2 others.

8.30 Handicap (£3,245: 1m 4f) (7)

1 (6) 66441 **SANSANETTI** 17 S C Williams 4-9-9 **P Cosgrave**
2 (7) 5-536 **DANCINGONDIAMONDS** 23 (T) P Morris 4-9-8 **D J Murphy (7)**
3 (1) 24025 **PHAEDRA** 59 (D) Joey Ramsden 4-9-7 **L Edmunds**
4 (5) 50534 **BULLDOG SPIRIT** 20 (P,T,D) B J Llewellyn & Robert Williams 6-9-6 **W Cox**
5 (3) -0110 **LUAN** 26 (T,CD) Nick Scholfield 4-9-6 **B Loughnane**
6 (2) 25155 **OTTOMAN** 23 (B,D) O Greenall & J Guerriero 4-9-4 **R Ryan**
7 (4) 050 **SEVENKINGSMUSTDIE** 43 (H) A King 4-9-3 **L Catton (3)**

11-8 Sansanetti, 4-1 Luan, 13-2 Phaedra, 7-1 Bulldog Spirit, 8-1 others.

Blinkered first time: Ripon Wobwobwob (4.13); **Brighton** Winston's Oath (5.40); **Lingfield** Mart (3.50); **Wolverhampton** Lux Aeterna (6.20). Royal Justice (8.00).

Results

Ripon

Going: Soft

1.55 (6f) 1, **Travellers Girl** (K Stott, 7-1); 2, My Boo Boo (7-2); 3, Arenite (1-1 fav). 8 ran. ½l, 4¼l. Roger Fell.
2.30 (1m 2f 190yd) 1, **Feelin' Free** (Connor Beasley, 9-2); 2, Time Thief (1-3); 3, Why Not Me (14-1). 4 ran. NR: Peace Belle. ½l, 27l. Jack Jones.
3.05 (6f) 1, **Silent Beauty** (D Egan, 15-8); 2, Rogue Jewel (9-4); 3, Harry Knows (12-1). 7 ran. NR: Pure Mint. 3l, sh. K P De Foy.
3.40 (1m) 1, **Spoken Truth** (D Tudhope, 6-4 fav); 2, Mirsky (8-1); 3, Racingbreaks Ryder (10-1). 9 ran. 1½l, ¾l. D O'Meara.
4.10 (5f) 1, **Rock Of England** (Oisin Murphy, 11-4 fav); 2, Thornaby Pearl (9-1); 3, Our Absent Friends (5-1). 9 ran. ½l, 1l. P T Midgley.**4.45** (1m 1f 170yd) 1, **Rogers Dream** (Oisin Murphy, 11-4 fav); 2, Little Ted (11-4 fav); 3, Volenti (4-1). 10 ran. 7l, 1l. Gihan Arnolda.
5.20 (1m 1f 170yd) 1, **Tiberio Force** (Mark Winn, 7-1); 2, Ten Sixty Six (9-2); 3, Evelyn's Phoenix (11-4 fav). 10 ran. nk, 3l. S Whitaker.
5.50 (1m 2f 190yd) 1, **Glitter Code** (Miss Nell Biker, 9-1); 2, Star Start (3-1 fav); 3, Jam Lass (18-1). 10 ran. nk, hd. E Bethell.
Placepot:£23.10 Quadpot:£3.40

Chepstow

Going: Good to Soft (soft in places)

1.45 (5f 16yd) 1, **Naval Cop** (Alfie Redman, 11-1); 2, Devon Angel (10-3); 3, Crystal Kraken (8-15). 5 ran. NR: Lion Of Persia. nk, 4¼l. A M Balding.
2.20 (6f 16yd) 1, **Washington Royale** (Ashley Lewis, 2-1); 2, Texas Crown (28-1); 3, Beechwood Glory (8-1). 6 ran. NR: Anna Belardo. 47½l, nk. M Appleby.
2.55 (6f 16yd) 1, **Kodicall** (William Cox, 12-1); 2, Lucky Radar (9-1); 3, Persian Gate (4-9). 4 ran. NR: Flag Of Nations. hd, ns. J S Moore.
3.30 (7f 16yd) 1, **Prince Ali** (Zoe Lewis, 10-1); 2, Escape Magic (9-4 fav); 3, Blue Point Express (16-1). 11 ran. 27½l, ½l. T Faulkner.
4.00 (7f 16yd) 1, **A Rose Adaay** (Ben Ffrench-Davis, 5-2); 2, Marisitta (9-1); 3, Rovinia (2-1 fav). 11 ran. 17½l, 1¼l. G Harris.
4.35 (1m 14yd) 1, **Thanos** (Lewis Edmunds, 5-1); 2, Law Of Design (28-1); 3, Scarfo (40-1). 16 ran. NR: Kodi Fire. 37½l, 1½l. Harry Charlton.
5.10 (5f 16yd) 1, **Level Up** (P J Dobbs, 5-2 fav); 2, Some Nightmare (7-1); 3, Connie's Rose (5-2 fav). 7 ran. ¾l, 5½l. P D Evans.
5.45 (1m 2f) 1, **Zambezi Magic** (William Cox, 20-1); 2, Meet Me In Meraki (15-8); 3, Staywitherjohnny (4-1). 5 ran. NR: Stipulation. nk, 1l. B J Llewellyn.
Placepot:£742.10 Quadpot:£90.70

Southwell

Going: Standard

1.32 (4f 214yd) 1, **Beautiful Effort** (S De Sousa, 4-1); 2, Sioux Moon (12-1); 3, Delighfully Hot (13-2). 10 ran. 3l, ½l. I Mohammed & J Santos.
2.07 (1m 6f 21yd) 1, **Edwardtheninth** (Gina Mangan, 10-1); 2, Blue Tulip (6-4); 3, Le Rouge Chinois (9-4). 6 ran. NR: Sound Gloria. 5½l, 2¼l. A Forbes.
2.42 (1m 3f 23yd) 1, **Pace Attack** (L Morris, 9-1); 2, Everyoneknowsadave (9-1); 3, Golspie (6-1). 7 ran. NR: Saxophonist. sh, 37½l. Sir Mark Prescott.
3.17 (1m 13yd) 1, **Rusheen Boy** (S M Levey, 12-1); 2, Special Breeze (14-1); 3, Aspull (100-1). 14 ran. ½l, ¾l. J & S Birkett.
3.51 (1m 13yd) 1, **Sailor's Return** (Cieren Fallon, 11-1); 2, Wield (25-1); 3, Mayflower Billy (15-2). 10 ran. ¾l, ½l. D O'Meara.
4.25 (1m 13yd) 1, **Kiani King** (Billy Loughnane, 3-1); 2, Roi De Coeur (9-4 fav); 3, Ballybunion (7-2). 9 ran. ½l, 27½l. H Morrison.
5.00 (6f 16yd) 1, **Classy Clarets** (Shay Farmer, 5-1); 2, Fantasy Obsessor (9-1); 3, Hectic (11-1). 12 ran. 2½l, sh. I Jardine.
5.35 (6f 16yd) 1, **Taaklam** (Tom Kiely-Marshall, 10-3); 2, Lope Y Linda (12-1); 3, Society Charm (14-1). 12 ran. 3¼l, 47½l. H Bethell.
Placepot:£18,756.50 Quadpot:£2,986.90

Cartmel

Going: Good to Soft (soft in places)

2.35 (2m 1f 46yd) 1, **Wicksey** (R P McLernon, 7-4); 2, Watcha Snoop (12-1); 3, Jambearee (22-1). 6 ran. 5l, 3¼l. B Haslam.
3.10 (2m 6f 31yd) 1, **Rauzan** (Sean Quinlan, 8-1); 2, Nottodaybobo (10-1); 3, Secret Secret (3-1). 8 ran. NR: Big Gypsy King, Dinons. 3½l, 6l. Lizzie Quinlan.
3.45 (3m 1f 83yd) 1, **Divilabother** (Harry Reed, 4-1); 2, Kayf Dancer (10-3 fav); 3, Al Sayah (13-2). 7 ran. 27½l, 37½l. T Davidson.
4.19 (3m 1f 107yd) 1, **Tommie Beau** (Benjamin Macey, 4-1); 2, Caughtinyourtrance (15-8); 3, Stratagem (11-1). 5 ran. NR: Tamarind Bay. 1l, 17½l. J W Mullins.
4.55 (2m 5f 34yd) 1, **Pour Les Filles** (S Bowen, 6-1); 2, King Roly (5-2); 3, Karnaval Point (8-1). 7 ran. NR: Cossack Chach. ¾l, 1½l. M Bowen.
5.30 (2m 1f 61yd) 1, **Achille Des Rocs** (Danny McMenamin, 6-1); 2, Ghasham (7-4); 3, Cuzco Du Mathan (10-3). 6 ran. NR: Blazing Court, Judicial Review. ¾l, 1¼l. L Morgan.
Placepot:£108.30 Quadpot:£12.50

Epsom

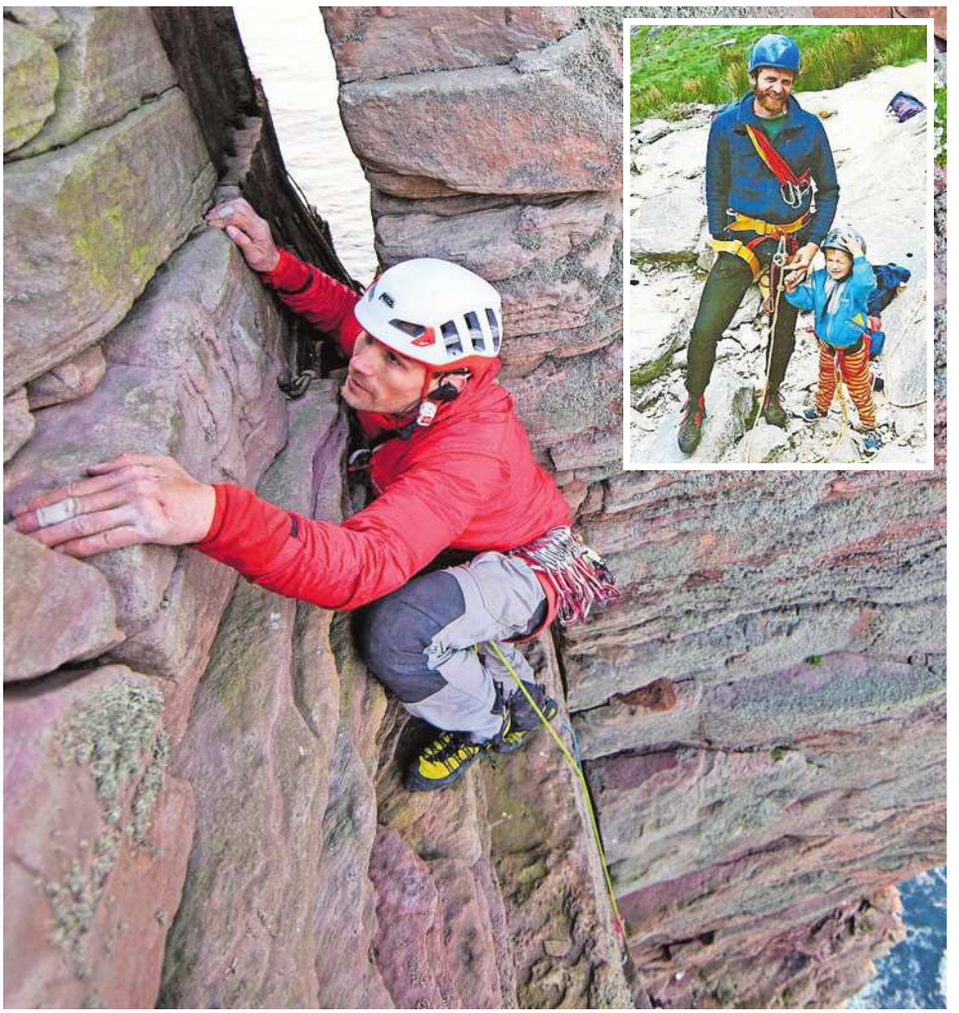
Going: Good to Soft

1.50 (6f 3yd) 1, **Proof** (Jason Watson, 10-1); 2, Harry's Halo (5-1); 3, Twirler (7-2). 7 ran. ¾l, 1½l. C Hills.
2.25 (7f 3yd) 1, **Summer Triangle** (Rhys Clutterbuck, 11-8 fav); 2, Artemis Star (13-8); 3, Angel Of Desire (11-2). 8 ran. ¾l, ½l. G & J Moore.
3.00 (7f 3yd) 1, **Aurora Majesty** (Pierre-Louis Jamin, 7-2); 2, Rhoscolyn (3-1 fav); 3, Naval Light (4-1). 8 ran. 17½l, 1¼l. A Watson.
3.35 (1m 4f 6yd) 1, **Seeking Charles** (Mr Henry Main, 12-1); 2, Crooked Path (9-2); 3, Edward Sexton (11-4). 14 ran. 6l, 2¼l. M D I Usher.
4.05 (1m 2f 17yd) 1, **Hello Cotai** (P Cosgrave, 14-1); 2, Almekarem (11-4); 3, Hengest (8-1). 9 ran. NR: Mao Shang Wong. 1½l, ½l. J R Boyle.
4.40 (1m 113yd) 1, **Tronido** (Tyler Heard, 12-1); 2, Eduardo Calderon (7-2 fav); 3, Oj Lifestyle (9-2). 8 ran. 1l, ns. S Dow.
5.15 (7f 3yd) 1, **Dapper Guest** (Saffie Osborne, 9-2); 2, Silver Trumpet (3-1); 3, French Affair (6-5 fav). 6 ran. ¾l, 2l. G G Margarson.
Placepot:£76.70 Quadpot:£12.70

Blind climber leads the way on the world's hardest routes

Jesse Dufton talks to **Rick Broadbent** about 'flipping fate a middle finger' and harrowing near-death experiences

ALASTAIR LEE/BRITROCK FILMS



Dufton nears the summit of the Old Man of Hoy, 137m high. He started climbing aged two, inset. Below, with wife Molly

Jesse Dufton is describing his lack of vision. "We're at the point where I don't have any useful sight," he says on a sofa in his Loughborough home, climbing books on a shelf behind him and a photograph of an expedition to Greenland above the mantelpiece. "I can't see my hand. I can't even see the silhouette of the hand against the light. Over time the retina has crumbled away into little breadcrumbs."

Dealt that hand, some might understandably shrink into their darkness, but he has gone the other way — outside, upwards and far beyond the ascent of the 137-metre Old Man of Hoy that first shone a spotlight away from his disability. "Blind and able" was his pithy self-appraisal. For Dufton, being the first blind man to lead a climb up that jagged column that stands as sandstone Jenga on the Orkney archipelago was "like flipping fate a middle finger".

This year he raised the bar by climbing the Bat Out of Hell in the Peak District. That was doubly astonishing for featuring dynamic moves, effectively swinging and launching his body and outstretched hand for a hold that he had to trust was there. Seeing has clearly never been a prerequisite of believing. "I think I have a very good sixth sense of reading the rock," Dufton says. The accompanying film, *Blind as a Bat*, also shows him falling alarmingly on a rope against the gritstone face as if tracking the arc of a conker on a string.

Paraclimbing will make its debut at the Los Angeles Paralympics in 2028, with competitors having six minutes to get as far as possible on a 15-metre wall. It will raise interest in the sport but the real challenges for Dufton, 40, are against natural obstacles. Two years ago he became the first blind person to lead a climb on Devils Tower in Wyoming, is heading to Chile in October and talks of his desire to take on Hydrophobia, a 500ft frozen waterfall in Canada.

Blind people do climb but he has taken this to a new level by leading. He goes up first, finding the route, fixing metal protection devices and clipping the rope to make it safe for others. The next person is seconding or following. "For climbers the routes you lead are the yardsticks you get measured by," he says. "It's more dangerous because the consequences of falling off when you're on lead are much more severe."

His wife, Molly, follows and gives advice via radio, but sometimes Dufton is too high to hear. It is a test of trust, feel and strength. Fittingly, he proposed after a nine-hour climb in Greenland.

He mentions the living room photograph that Molly has described to him as evidence of the camaraderie of risk. "About a week before it was taken we had an incident and I thought three of my friends were going to die. Coming through that experience builds bonds that I don't think you ever get in day-to-day life. There was a huge cornice, an overhang of snow, and you're abseiling past that with your pulk [sled] attached to you. We were in the process of lowering Jen and the anchor ripped out.

"It's not like we hadn't been cautious. We'd had a buried ski, a snow bollard and a piece of gear called a deadman connected to make it solid, but it was all ripped out simultaneously. Our three friends went all the way down, and if they'd hit anything it could have been … yeah. There were about ten seconds where I'd thought they had died because Alistair got yanked off the ledge next to me and all the pulks rolled over one another and smashed to pieces.

"Then Molly and I sat on this tiny snow ledge, smaller than this sofa, with no ropes, no axes, nothing, the nearest civilisation is 200 miles away and there's only polar bears in your life. F***!" They got down by not panicking and kicking steps into the near-vertical slope.

There are obvious questions born from a place of sighted convention. An obvious one is why does a blind man want to lead when it is so difficult? "I'm not relying on anyone else," he responds with quiet pragmatism. "I'm not being infantilised by someone else. It would be very easy to construe my blindness as a reason not to go climbing. Even if we went climbing and I said I was just going to go second, no one would ever question that and people would probably say that was amazing. But I was never into that and didn't want to be treated differently. You don't go to Wimbledon to play badminton, do you?"

You are probably getting the idea that Dufton is not the self-pitying type, which is no doubt part of his success. In April he completed the ascent of the Bat Out of Hell, which is rated extremely difficult, or E5 6a (an elite rock climbing grade), and admitted he had choked up a little. "I'm not a particularly exuberant or emotional person," he says. "I'm quite understated and I think that goes with the territory. You have to decode climbers. When they say 'it's a bit spicy' what they really mean is it's f***ing terrifying."

The son of a climber, he started when he was two at Idwal Slabs in Snowdonia. Born with severe sight impairment, later diagnosed as Rod-cone dystrophy, he led his first route at 11. "I don't know what normal is," he muses. He could read if he held a book close and used a huge magnifying glass, but could never see the board at school. "I could see the tree but it was a green blob and could never see the individual leaves. Once it got to night it was totally black."

At 15 he remembers being in a park when it struck him that his eyesight would one day disappear. In a moment of clarity, he decided not to pursue a medical research career to fix his eyes because he did not want his sight to dominate his life. "Obviously it's not perfect, but you don't go into a raging despair about what you're going to lose. In the first year of my PhD it started to slowly fade away."

He got his doctorate in materials chemistry and funds his adventures by working as a patent specialist for a fuel cell manufacturer and by giving keynote speeches. A high achiever in every sense, I wonder if reaching a summit can ever be as thrilling without the panoramic views and sense of scale that comes from looking at what you have done. "I can tell there's light up there but can't see anything," he replies. "There was an element abseiling down the Old Man of Hoy and hearing the waves crashing below you, but the internal satisfaction is enough." He points to the photograph again. "I guess you have things like that to remind you of the really significant ones because even though I can't see it, I know it's there — and that's kind of nice."

He says there was no urge to fill his memory bank with images or routes from untapped challenges.

Dufton also chose not to go to a blind school and cannot read Braille. Molly is his narrator and voice of reason, and he says her face is the thing he misses seeing most.

He shows me into his shed, which has a climbing wall angled towards us, an armoury of ropes and clips, and a fingerboard that he describes as a "a block of wood with different-sized slots to hang off". If it gets too easy he straps weights to himself. "You're training the muscles in your forearms because you don't have any muscles in your hands."

Being part of the GB paraclimbing team for almost a decade has made him commit to the physical side as well as technical, and showed him that he could be very good, but there are caveats. "I am sad that some people in paraclimbing don't have a broader horizon and are content to climb indoors on climbing walls. It's not my place to judge and perhaps they think their disability affects them. If they're happy to do that it's fine, but I just think they're missing out on a load of amazing experiences and that makes me sad. I find the most rewarding routes are the ones at the sweet spot — they're doable but only if you give everything. I'd say when you look at outside climbing that's where I'm unique. I guess, unarguably, I'm the best in the world."

As a scientist, his methodology is about solving problems rather than being dialled into danger, as he puts it, so free soloing — climbing without ropes — is not something that fascinates him. "Some people definitely get off on the danger, some like it because it requires mastery and there's no second chances, but for me the consequences of failure are far too high and too many people have died."

Of course, after completing 2,000 traditional routes in the UK alone there have been injuries, including torn cartilage in his left shoulder, arthritis, a badly bent wrist, strained fingers, and assorted cuts and bruises, but LA is now another destination. From "crossing the psychological Rubicon" to climbing the Bat Out of Hell, this unsung debunker of impossible was once caught between a rock and a hard place — and chose the life-affirming route to the top.

Sanderson: Last season maybe cost lads their England spots

Sale Sharks director of rugby says he would be surprised if Lawes does not go to World Cup, writes **John Westerby**

STEVE TAYLOR/PPAUK/SHUTTERSTOCK

Sanderson was deeply affected by the failures of his Sale side last season but has been re-energised by the additions that they have made, including Lawes, below

The stereotypical image of a rugby club in pre-season features players being flogged to their physical limits, with perhaps the odd sadistic smile or two creeping across the faces of their onlooking coaches. But this is also the time of year when crucial foundations are laid for the season ahead, when playing combinations are forged, when game plans are hatched, when a team begin to discover their identity.

These processes are more important still for teams who have underperformed the previous season or who have undergone a rebuilding of their squad. Both of those apply to Sale Sharks, who are aiming to bounce back from a miserable 2025-26 season, in which they finished seventh after winning only five of their 18 Gallagher Prem matches. Alex Sanderson, the director of rugby, was already in the process of reshaping their squad and their line-up for the new season will feature a raft of new signings, including Courtney Lawes, Joe Marchant and Alex Lozowski.

Hence the importance that has been placed on the weeks before the action begins next month. "It has to be the best pre-season we've ever had," Sanderson says.

Having finished in the top three in the previous three years, Sale's slide last season was alarmingly sharp. A transitional campaign had been anticipated, to an extent, with a number of players in the final years of their contracts, but injuries to senior players bit deep and exposed a lack of depth. Ben Curry played only twice all season, Tom Curry seven times and Luke Cowan-Dickie and Bevan Rodd eight times apiece.

There was instability among the management, too, and Sale quickly found themselves on the wrong side of gruesome scorelines such as a 65-14 defeat away to Saracens in October. Confidence began to unravel and they went a full season without winning consecutive league matches. By the time Saracens travelled north to the CorpAcq Stadium in April, the damage was worse still, as Sale shipped an unthinkable 13 tries in an 85-19 defeat.

All of which represented the first real backward step for Sanderson, 46, since he rejoined Sale — where he had started his playing career — from Saracens in 2021. "That was probably the toughest season in my 20 years as a coach," he says. "My first year was a baptism of fire, when I was working with Eddie Jones and I helped coach Queensland Reds to their worst-ever season, and seasons like that do scar you. Looking back, the failure of last season was self-induced, to a degree, and I take responsibility for that as director of rugby — it's on me.

"I felt at the time we'd be more competitive and with less injuries we would have been. But you have to compensate for that with the strength of your squad, and we didn't. It was a humbling experience."

The reset had already begun in the latter stages of last season, with a greater emphasis on attack and retaining possession. New signings have offered their own perspectives in pre-season, and internationals such as George Ford, Tom Roebuck, Tom Curry and Cowan-Dickie have been back in training in Portugal.

Sanderson has benefited from a few weeks away with his family and returned last month relishing the different challenge of rebounding from last season's disappointments and reshaping a squad he has led for five years.

"I feel re-energised, it all feels so fresh," he says. "The lads have come in wanting to really draw a line under last season and move forward. We have a different methodology to work on and the new lads have brought their own insights. We've been working hard and there's some really positive vibes. The challenge is there and I feel a real joy about the job again."

There were, inevitably, times last season when that love for the game was harder to find. This is a coach who has always seemed to keep the game in perspective, who manages his emotions impressively in public on a match day, whatever the result. But much as any coach or player attempts to control the highs or lows of results, cumulative defeats over the course of a season will take their toll.

"You still rock up on a Monday morning with the same enthusiasm, but it gets increasingly difficult to do so on the back of losses," Sanderson says. "That's something I hadn't really experienced and now I know. I'm fortunate to have an unbelievable missus and a son who loves me unconditionally. But she's noticed the return of a lightness, a sense of humour that perhaps hadn't been there since maybe February.

"The stress is like illness, you don't realise you were stressed until you come out the other side. Of course you take the job home, because you live it. It can't be a nine-to-five, this role. It's got to be a vocation."

Coaching is a calling for which Sanderson has seemed admirably equipped and he has built a considerable reputation, first as an assistant coach in his long stint with Saracens, then as the main man at Sale, leading them to the play-offs in four of his five seasons, finishing runners-up in 2023. He is among a group of young English head coaches — along with Phil Dowson, of Northampton Saints, and Geoff Parling, at Leicester Tigers — who could become potential successors to Steve Borthwick with the national team.

"Last season was damaging for some reputations and potentially for some of the lads for their England spots," Sanderson says. "There's a bit of hubris in there for me, too. Maybe I thought, 'Give me a squad and I can make them competitive.' Well, at times last season we weren't competitive. I've learnt a really hard lesson."

He has learnt not to take on too much when things are going awry. Last season Marco Bortolami left as head coach after six months in the job and Byron McGuigan's time as defence coach was split with England. As a result, Sanderson spent more hours on the training field, even as he was attempting to recruit new players for the squad rebuild. But Mike Forshaw has now replaced McGuigan, Joe Ford is into his second year as attack coach and Sanderson feels he has the coaches around him that he wants.

"There was instability in the coaching group, but the group we've got now is really tight," he says. "I have been delegating a bit more because there's a lot of trust there."

As for the squad rebuild, there were frustrations along the way, and some of the signings, notably Lawes, came in late, but Sanderson is delighted with the resources at his disposal. Marchant, the centre, will be looking to resume his international career after moving from Stade Français, while Lozowski brings midfield experience from Saracens. A clutch of Welsh international front-five forwards — Christ Tshiunza, Nicky Smith and Tomas Francis — should help to restore Sale's set-piece potency.

But most interest will surround the return to English rugby of Lawes, after two seasons in the French second division with Brive. "He's been brilliant from day one since he arrived," Sanderson says. "Sometimes people with his reputation come with egos, they might not want to put themselves out there in case that pride takes a fall. There's no ego with Courtney, he's been looking out for the younger lads, and he's slipped into a leadership role without me even asking him."

When Lawes left Northampton, it was generally assumed that he would not add to his mighty 105 England caps, but he has indicated his desire to play international rugby again, with the World Cup next year. How good a player can Lawes still be at the age of 37? "He moves as well as the young lads, he's lost none of that," Sanderson says. "I'll be surprised if he doesn't make the World Cup squad. He'll be brilliant for us."

An early introduction for Lawes is likely as Sale will look to integrate their new players in the Prem Cup matches this weekend, before their first Gallagher Prem game at home to Bristol Bears on September 26. They are taking solace from the fact that each of the past four Prem league winners have finished outside the top six in the preceding two seasons. After last season's disappointments, Sale will not be short of motivation.

"That feeling of euphoria from winning, of course that drives you on," Sanderson says. "But I'd say how it felt last year is probably now a bigger motivator. Never to feel that way again, never wanting to be in that place again. That can spur you on to do great things."

Alcaraz ends five-month absence with perfect start

Tom Kershaw

Tennis Correspondent, New York

R Safiullin (Russ)	4	4	4
C Alcaraz (Sp, 2)	6	6	6

The spectators crammed inside Arthur Ashe Stadium could have reasonable doubts about what version of Carlos Alcaraz would materialise at this US Open. A four-and-a-half month absence with a wrist injury, ended only by a rickety appearance in the revamped mixed doubles event last week, meant fears lingered over whether the Spaniard would even make the start line and walk out to a rapturous ovation like a returning soldier. After all, it was here in this arena that Alcaraz won his first grand-slam title as a teenager and became world No1 for the first time, ushering in a new era of tennis that many had feared would labour under the weight of its past. And yet, what has been assured virtually ever since — at least when Alcaraz is on court — is that it will be box office, whether he is attempting a tweener at the crucial end of a tight second set or pretending his shoe is a phone and giggling at his own joke with child-like enthusiasm.

A 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 victory over Roman Safiullin in 2hr 22min was the perfect start both for Alcaraz, who admitted he was not sure how his wrist might hold up in a marathon contest, and for the tournament. The dominance of Jannik Sinner, who is absent with a knee injury, has largely made the men's tour mundanely predictable in recent months. Alexander Zverev, the Italian's closest challenger, does not inspire the warmest of emotions and, after Novak Djokovic's first-round exit on Sunday was followed by a shock defeat for Arthur Fils, one of the bright young stars seeking his major breakthrough, the men's draw — and the USTA, whose ticket prices have come under increasing scrutiny — could hardly afford to lose its greatest attraction.

"Well, I was trying to enjoy as much as I can and not to think about anything else, I would say. But it's easy to say; difficult to do. Once you step on the court, playing an official match, playing the first round, obviously you want to win," Alcaraz said. "You don't know what's going to happen in the match, after four months and a half almost, you don't know what's going to happen in your body, in your mind, everything. It's totally different. But, you know, I just try to play, you know, one game at a time and try to feel good, to enjoy playing points, feeling the love from the people. Hopefully they enjoyed it. Yeah, after the match, my body felt great. I'm just really, really happy that I made it finally."

There are sterner tests to come — Alcaraz faces Portugal's Jaime Faria in the second round — but this was encouraging evidence that he can make a deep run in New York, where he is attempting to become the first man to defend the title since Roger Federer in 2008. With Sinner absent, Alcaraz might not need to be at 100 per cent to claim his eighth grand-slam title either. The 23-year-old inevitably was not quite there, and Safiullin, who has risen more than 100 places in the rankings this season, can be a deceptive customer on his day — the 29-year-old Russian defeated Alcaraz at the Paris Masters in 2023. However, this was not said day — not by any stretch — as Safiullin spurned chances and struggled to apply much pressure from the off.

The start was tentative and error-strewn on both sides of the court. Alcaraz double-faulted on the first point, just as he did alongside Serena Williams in the doubles, but Safiullin missed a point-blank forehand after the ball sat up beautifully off a net cord on break point. Sporting a compression sleeve on his arm, Alcaraz's slower serve speed was the most glaring difference to his old self and he conceded it was the shot "he was struggling with the most". However, once he detonated a 95mph forehand to break at 3-3, something closer to normal service resumed. Alcaraz was rarely made to feel uncomfortable from thereon, aside from a sloppy service game early in the second set, but he recovered it immediately and cruised through the third, pumping his fists and roaring to the crowd after every winner.

It was not a performance to put the fear of God into his rivals, but they will be under no illusions about the task at hand now in a draw that feels distinctly less wide open than before. "The level of tennis is going to be better for sure [in the second round]," Alcaraz said. "I'm really happy with the level I played, first official match since four months, so I just played really good tennis. I'm really proud about it, but I need more matches under my belt, to get again into the rhythm of the tournament, into the matches, better and better after every day."

Alcaraz sported heavy strapping on his right arm as he won in New York

Djokovic was in tears towards the end of the defeat, left. The sight of the 39-year-old in pain, above and far right, became a frequent one during the match. The Serb said his physical ailments were something he had been carrying in "pretty much every match this year". Navone, right, enjoyed the biggest victory of his career. The 25-year-old had previously beaten a top-ten player only once

Vomiting, weeping Djokovic has nothing left in painful defeat

M Navone (Arg)	77	5	4	6	6
N Djokovic (Ser, 4)	6s	7	6	2	1

Tom Kershaw

Novak Djokovic staggered into the depths of sporting hell, chewed painkillers like sweets, and painted the corners of Arthur Ashe Stadium with vomit. But in the end no amount of spirit — and the 24-times grand-slam champion demonstrated it in agonising abundance — could stave off the gruesome reality of a first-round defeat by Mariano Navone at the US Open.

Twenty years had passed since Djokovic last lost at the first hurdle of a grand-slam event, against Paul Goldstein at the Australian Open. The Serbian was a fresh-faced teenager then. As he broke down in tears the end of this five-set, five-hour marathon, as his serve lost power and he struggled to run due to the pain in his back, his defiance of his 39 years to reach the semi-finals of Wimbledon this summer felt like a distant memory. This was an exhibition in suffering, a man refusing to accept his fate until he was left with no choice.

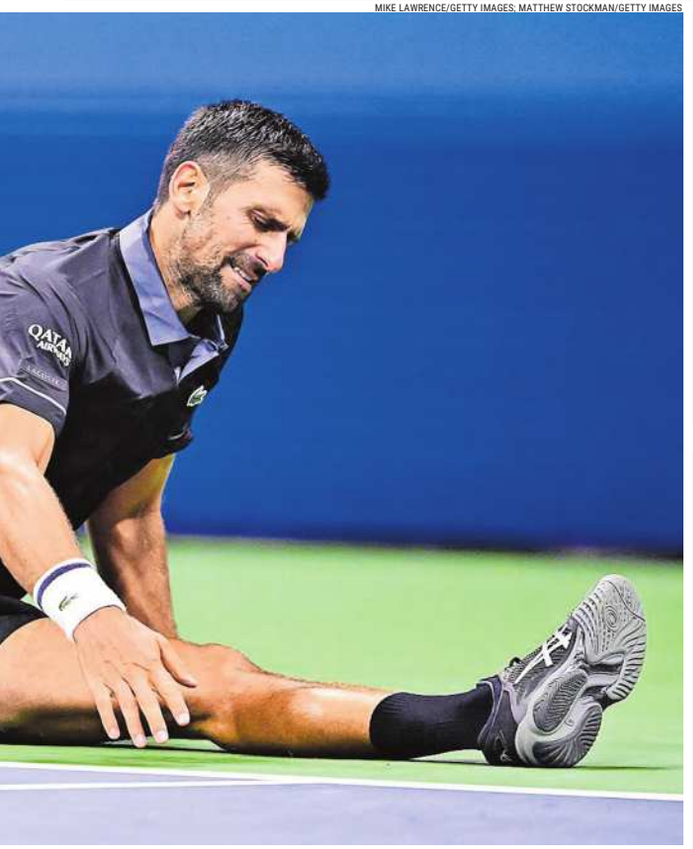
"When it comes to the match itself and how I felt with the body and playing, it was really not enjoyable," Djokovic said. "I pretty much despised every moment that I spent on the court."

He has repeatedly refused to put a date on his retirement but he has known few losses like this. Navone has a solid all-round game but the 25-year-old Argentinian had previously beaten a top-ten player only once in his career.

Still, it couldn't be described as a complete shock. Djokovic had only played six tournaments this year. He has managed to raise his game in the slams as he chases a coveted 25th title, but he was sick on court and reduced to all fours during a defeat against Thiago Tirante in Cincinnati a fortnight ago and alluded to a continuing health concern. Djokovic did not provide details but it became clear the issue lingered.

"I think it was obvious that it was an awful feeling on the court for me," he said after the 7-6 (7-5), 5-7, 4-6, 6-2, 6-1 defeat. "It's something I've been carrying, unfortunately, pretty much every match this year. You know, vomiting, throwing up, [there is] a serious issue there. Then my whole body, you know, starts to collapse, basically cramping and pain. Yeah, the back just gave up in the end and shoulder and I couldn't

MIKE LAWRENCE/GETTY IMAGES; MATTHEW STOCKMAN/GETTY IMAGES



close it out. I don't know [if it's something he can fix]. I'm trying, man. I'm trying. Let's see."

After the opening game of the match Djokovic seemed to momentarily forget which corner of the court his towel was in and had to ask the umpire for assistance. He served poorly, made a catalogue of unforced errors and soon thereafter began to complain towards his box and double over in discomfort.

If Navone managed to extend the rallies beyond five shots, he dominated the points. The roof had to be closed due to rain, which brought the temperature down inside the stadium, but still Djokovic seemed unable to rouse himself.

The turning point arrived at 4-3 in the second set when he won a long rally with a backhand. Although he swayed on the baseline like a punch-drunk boxer on the ropes, looking at various stages like he could collapse, Djokovic somehow steadied himself once the ball was in play and won nine points in succession to clinch the second set.

It felt then that he would run away with it, but his anguish only became more pronounced. At 3-3 in the third, Djokovic vomited at the back of the court and returned there more than once when another episode threatened. It appeared to help as emotion returned to his forlorn demeanour. At 4-4 a missed backhand was met with a roar of frustration and he responded with an immense act of escapism, somehow retrieving a Navone smash. Djokovic riled up the crowd and snatched the set as Navone cratered under the pressure.

But the survival act could only last so long. Djokovic was down on his haunches at 1-1 in the fourth. He dropped his racket and crumpled to the floor at 3-2 after handing back the break.

Up in the box his wife Jelena watched through her fingers with their two children. Djokovic's first serve had been his lifeline and won him so many free points, with Navone's returns poor, but the pain in his back rendered it impotent. Navone broke to take a 4-2 lead then saved two break points in the following game. From there Navone won 17 of the next 20 points as the decider was reduced to an emotional formality. The greatest competitor in the sport's history had nothing left. The question on everyone's lips was if he would be back on Arthur Ashe again.

Springboks select Kolbe at full back

Rugby union

Cheslin Kolbe has been named to start at full back in the third Test against New Zealand with South Africa's head coach Rassie Erasmus making four changes to the team that started the 33-26 victory on Saturday.

The full back Damian Willemse has been ruled out by a hamstring injury that forced him off at half-time during the win in Cape Town that levelled the four-match series at 1-1.

Kolbe, who kicked 18 points on Saturday, switches from the right wing to replace Willemse and Kurt-Lee Arendse takes over the No 14 shirt.

The starting front row from last weekend — loose-head prop Gerhard Steenekamp, 39-year-old hooker Deon Fourie and tight-head prop Thomas du Toit — will begin the third Test on the bench. In come Ox Nché, Malcolm Marx and Wilco Louw — the trio originally named to start the second Test before Erasmus swapped his entire front row on the day of the match.

It is unclear whether this will be the team that takes the field for the third Test after Erasmus made five total alterations to the side that he originally said would start last weekend.

Erasmus said a change in the matchday weather triggered the last-minute reshuffle. "We started with the 'reserve' front row because they were lighter. Had it been wet we would have stuck with the original line-up," he said. "We know how it felt [losing] after the first match in Johannesburg, and such a result really galvanises a team. So, we have no doubt that they [New Zealand] will go full-out to win this Test before the series finale in the USA next week."

This weekend's Test will be held at Soccer City in Johannesburg, which can accommodate 92,000 spectators.

South Africa C Kolbe; K-L Arendse, J Kriel, D de Allende, E Hooker; S Feinberg-Mngomezulu, C Reinach; O Nché, M Marx, W Louw, E Etzebeth, R Nortje, S Kolisi (capt), P-S du Toit, J Wiese. **Replacements** D Fourie, G Steenekamp, T du Toit, L de Jager, A Esterhuizen, C Hanekom, M van den Berg, M Libbok. **Third Test** Johannesburg, Saturday, 4.10pm. **TV** Sky Sports.

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The secret to Smith's improvement? Tennis-ball drills with Sarah Taylor

Mike Atherton

Chief Cricket Correspondent

MATT IMPEY/SHUTTERSTOCK

Smith, who has been working hard at improving his wicketkeeping while close to the stumps, was praised by Robinson for forcing batsmen to stay in their crease

The Gloves Are Off is the title of at least four wicketkeeping memoirs — Godfrey Evans and Matt Prior from England; Tim Zoehrer from Australia and Kent's Steve Marsh. After a lifetime behind the sticks, all of them would have war stories to tell about the state of their hands when the gloves finally did come off, though not to compare with the famous photo of Dave "Fingers" Morrison, a former club 'keeper who was memorably described as having "metacarpals like a relief map of the Himalayas".

Wicketkeeping has always been a hazardous business. There is a photograph of Ian Healy, a fine Australian wicketkeeper, holding up his gnarled and crooked fingers — though they were not in the same extreme state of Morrison's. Mark Boucher, the South African 'keeper whose career was ended prematurely when, after standing up to the stumps, a bail damaged his eye, would need no reminding of the danger. Boucher was not wearing a helmet that day and such protection is ubiquitous now.

There is little that is completely new in cricket, though tactics come and go and emphasis around certain skills waxes and wanes. Wicketkeeping is having its moment again. For the past three decades, since the arrival of Adam Gilchrist, who replaced Healy and changed the narrative around the position, 'keepers have been judged as much on their secondary skill (batting) as primary skill ('keeping). Now, with the tactic of standing up to medium-paced bowlers becoming so entrenched, that is changing again.

Standing up to a medium-pacer is not new. The aforementioned Evans was one of the first to explore it as a tactic to help Alec Bedser, the great medium-pace bowler to whom Evans began to stand up during the 1946-47 Ashes tour. I played in the Ashes Test at Sydney in 1990-91, when Jack Russell produced a memorable leg-side stumping off Gladstone Small — no slouch of a bowler — to dismiss Dean Jones. Russell was elated — it was a split-second of brilliance, the culmination of years of hard work and practice.

While not new, it feels as though it is becoming more widespread again. Since Tom Blundell and Alex Carey began to derail Bazball through their position at the stumps in order to keep Harry Brook, especially, and Joe Root in their crease, the expectation and scrutiny on the skill of a wicketkeeper have increased. Mohammad Rizwan has followed suit this summer, as has Jamie Smith, given the selection of Ollie Robinson, precisely the type of bowler the tactic is designed to help.

England v Pakistan
Third Test, Edgbaston, starts September 9
TV: Sky Sports Main/Cricket

Robinson was generous in his praise of Smith after the Lord's victory in which he was, for the third time this summer, man of the match. He described his bowling and Smith's wicketkeeping as a "double act", one where, he said, it felt like they were "teaming up" on a batsman. Bedser used to speak about Evans in similarly generous terms. For Smith, though, who has had precious little grounding in this art, it has been a steep learning curve.

It was fascinating listening to Smith talk about this aspect of his game after Lord's. Before this summer he had never really stood up to quicker bowlers before and, remember, at Surrey he doesn't do much wicketkeeping in matches at all. When he started to do it at Trent Bridge against New Zealand he looked like he was enjoying it about as much as a trip to the dentist. Since then the improvement has been marked and he sounded like he was up for it, which is crucial given how lavish movement off the seam has added to the challenge.

He's been working intensely at it. Every morning during the Lord's Test, England's fielding coach, Sarah Taylor, could be seen putting Smith through drills designed to improve this particular facet of his game. Mostly they involved Taylor standing about three-quarters of the way down a practice pitch, whipping tennis balls towards Smith with a rapid sidearm flick of a tennis racket while Smith stood up to rubbery wickets that would deflect but not repel the ball.

Taylor would get quicker and quicker and Smith's reactions would be increasingly tested. Invariably, his position was solid and his glovework excellent — with the added advantage that the tennis balls required him to catch the ball with soft hands which were neither hurt nor damaged in the process. His inner gloves allowed him some protection and cushion.

It's tricky to replicate this skill against a hard ball in practice for obvious reasons. Sometimes there is a physical restriction — nets often don't have much space behind the stumps. Net pitches might be even more treacherous than match pitches. Most of all, 'keepers want to save their hands: Smith's were pounded in that Lord's Test and adding two or three days of similar net practice would increase the potential for damage and wear and tear.

So Taylor's tennis ball drills it is. Between them, they have worked mainly on positioning — and Smith is noticeably much stiller than he was earlier in the summer and better at getting his right side out of the way as he takes the ball, allowing greater give with his hands on impact. As confidence in his skill increases, so the tendency to move too much too soon is reduced. Smith's glovework was top-class at Lord's which was vital in respect of both the match and because, as an all-rounder, he cannot afford scrutiny on his primary skill to affect the confidence he has in his secondary skill as a batsman.

Test matches are designed over multiple days to encourage the broadest range of skills. One of the potential problems with the frequency of short Tests — in the past decade, about 20 per cent of matches have finished within three days, compared to 7 per cent in the 1990s — is that spin could become more emasculated and with it the chance for 'keepers to show off their skills. England have bowled three overs of spin in the past two Tests.

But with bowlers like Matt Henry, Mohammad Abbas and Robinson holding sway this summer, 'keepers are being given license to show off again. They have not always been given their due: when Travis Head pipped Carey for the Allan Border Medal recently down under, it was noted that a wicketkeeper has not won that award since Gilchrist in 2003. Now, wicketkeeping is having its moment again.

Trescothick: England's attack brings back memories of 2005

CONTINUED FROM BACK

Sky Sports interview in which Imran Khan's sons accused the Pakistan government of "trying to kill" their imprisoned father. The chairman of the PCB, Mohsin Naqvi, is also Pakistan's interior minister.

Pakistan are also renowned for having a coaching merry-go-round. Hesson is the eighth person to take charge of a Pakistan men's team since 2023. In October 2024, Gary Kirsten resigned as white-ball coach after only six months amid reports of disagreements with the board. Jason Gillespie then resigned as Test coach two months later and they went through a number of appointments before hiring Sarfaraz in April 2026.

Marcus Trescothick, England's interim head coach who has presided over the wins at Headingley and Lord's, believes there are similarities between the present four-man Test seam attack and the one that played in the famous 2005 Ashes series.

Jofra Archer, Gus Atkinson, Josh Tongue and Ollie Robinson have spearheaded England to a comprehensive series win over Pakistan and Trescothick, who was part of that 2005 Ashes win, agreed that they are comparable to Matthew Hoggard, Steve Harmison, Andrew Flintoff and Simon Jones.

"We do have some real skill and when you look back to '05 — Harmy, Fred, Simon and Hoggy — you could easily make those sorts of comparisons," Trescothick said. "We're building an attack in the four people that we have had here with a few guys backing it up with pace and skill around it.

"The more Test matches they all play together, the better opportunity we've got in more challenging conditions and away from home in particular."

England's red-ball side have one more match this summer and then do not play again until December, when they tour South Africa for three Tests. That series will be a better litmus test for where this England team are at. Pakistan have been a weak opposition and the conditions have been particularly bowler friendly, but Trescothick believes there is a very good balance in this England attack.

"We've got a good contrast in what we are trying to do. What we do have is three guys bowling at 92mph, which is nice to have in your armoury," he said.

Even though England have taken an unassailable lead in the series, Trescothick hinted that there would be few, if any, changes for the final Test at Edgbaston. The squad will be announced later this week. It is possible that England name an unchanged XI given that the first two Tests were won quite quickly, meaning the workload for the bowlers has been low.

England's new permanent head coach, Stephen Fleming, will take over at the end of this series and Trescothick wants to sign off his time in charge with an emphatic whitewash. "I want to win the series 3-0, and I think if you're going to do that you want to play the most consistent team possible," he said.

My qualities suit Premier League, says £123m Barcola

Paul Joyce
Northern Football Correspondent

Bradley Barcola has vowed to bring "speed" and "danger" to Liverpool's attack after completing a £123 million move from Paris Saint-Germain.

Barcola will cost an initial fee of £106 million with potential add-ons of £17 million based on individual and team achievements. He has signed a five-year deal and will wear the No 29 shirt. He is likely to be Liverpool's final signing of the transfer window, with Cody Gakpo's proposed move to Manchester City all but over. City had indicated they were prepared to pay £80 million but a lack of time for Liverpool to find alternatives means he is now set to stay at Anfield.

The France international Barcola was a priority signing for Liverpool, whose patient pursuit of the attacker, who turns 24 tomorrow, was emboldened by their understanding that he only wanted to move to Anfield. Arsenal had also been linked with him.

Liverpool believe Barcola's pace will add a different dimension to their attack and that, in turn, will bring out the best in the club's two other £100 million-plus signings, Florian Wirtz and Alexander Isak. He has been earmarked to play off the left.

The challenge of ensuring the trio gel will become a pressing task for the new head coach Andoni Iraola, who has started his reign with draws against Newcastle United and Nottingham Forest which have exposed glitches in the squad he inherited.

Barcola believes he will immediately adapt to English football and expects working under Iraola to lead to further improvement.

"It's to bring speed, danger," he said of his qualities in an interview with Liverpoolfc.com. "I think the style of play of the coach and my style of play are very similar, so I think I can only add more of the same to this team.

"I think it's [my style] adapted to the Premier League. I've been able to play many times against teams from the Premier League. I think my qualities are very good for the Premier League.

"I was able to talk to him [Iraola] several times and he told me that my quality brought a real plus to this team and that he was counting on me, that he had confidence in me. That's what made me want to join this team, because when you have the confidence of a coach you can only be good on the pitch. So, it's a very good thing to play with such a good coach."

Barcola has not played since scoring for France in the World Cup third-place play-off 6-4 defeat by England on July 18, having been frozen out by PSG in recent weeks because of his desire to move to Anfield.

LIVERPOOL FC/GETTY IMAGES

Liverpool believe Barcola's pace will add a different dimension to their attack

Iraola will want to integrate Barcola into his plans as quickly as possible and Liverpool face Ipswich Town in the Premier League on Friday looking for their first win of the season.

Liverpool have now committed to spending more than £220 million this year with centre back Jérémy Jacquet, another winger Victor Muñoz and youngsters Ifeanyi Ndukwe, who is on loan at Levante, Mor Talla Ndiaye and Samuel Martínez recruited. Martínez will join next season.

They have been weighing up a further move for a right winger, with Ismaïla Sarr of Crystal Palace and Brighton & Hove Albion's Yankuba Minteh options.

However, unless Liverpool change their stance, Gakpo will be asked to fight for a place in Iraola's line-up. Gakpo can play on the left, through the middle and he started on the right flank against Forest and set up the opening goal for Isak.

Meanwhile, Valencia are hoping to seal a loan move for Harvey Elliott before the deadline. Elliott has not been involved in either of Liverpool's Premier League squads this season and needs regular football after last term's difficult loan move to Aston Villa.

Villa opted not to pick him for much of the campaign so as to avoid triggering a clause that would have meant they would have had to pay £35 million for the former England Under-21 international.

Liverpool are in talks to sign the Genk goalkeeper Lucca Brughmans and winger Djylian N'Guessan from Saint-Étienne. Both players are 18 and would join next season.

Brughmans has also been linked with Real Madrid and would cost a low fixed fee with add-ons rising to £30 million depending on his development. N'Guessan would cost £4.2 million and remain in France this season with a view to moving to Anfield in 2027-28.

Nottingham Forest have had a £25 million bid, plus £5 million in add-ons, for Liverpool midfielder Trey Nyoni rejected. Nyoni, 19, will be granted more minutes after the departure of Curtis Jones to Inter Milan.

'We must keep Marcus driven'

Harry Maguire believes Marcus Rashford can star for Manchester United this season, provided he maintains his hunger and focus (Paul Hirst writes).

Returning from his season on loan at Barcelona, Rashford was in United's starting XI on Sunday and impressed in the 5-2 win over Ipswich Town at Old Trafford.

In his past two seasons with United, he lacked consistency, with only 11 Premier League goals. In January 2025 Ruben Amorim, Michael Carrick's predecessor, said he would rather play his 63-year-old goalkeeper coach than Rashford because of the forward's apparent lack of application in training, but Maguire likes what he has seen.

"He's been really good," Maguire said. "If we keep him fit, keep him happy, keep him driven, keep him hungry, he is a great asset to have."

Messi quits after World Cup final heartbreak

CONTINUED FROM BACK

as a runner-up at the World Cup twice, in 2014 and this past summer, when Argentina lost to Spain in the United States, a moment that Messi has now decided will mark the end of his international career.

"After this time that has passed since the final, having thought about it a lot, I want to inform everyone that I am retiring from the national team," Messi said in a statement. "It was a decision that hurt and hurts deep in my soul, but I understand that this is the moment. I swear to you that I always gave everything — not only in recent years when we won everything, but before as well. I always fought and left everything on the pitch for this shirt, to bring you joy and to make you feel proud of being Argentine through football.

"There is little time left, chapters are closing, and this is one that hurts me deeply. I love, have loved, and will always love being part of the national team. I gave it my all, I have nothing left to give, and besides, incredible young players are coming up behind who deserve to be here.

Messi was part of the Argentina side that won the 2022 World Cup

"Thank you for all the love over these 20 years. Now I will be one of you, always cheering and supporting from the outside (in the good times and the bad, even more so).

"Thank you to my family for always being there, for joining me on this journey that was so beautiful yet difficult. Thank you to each of the coaches, team-mates, and directors I had the privilege to share this with. I take unforgettable memories and moments with me.

"I leave with the peace of mind and the pride of having given you, together with my team-mates, dream-like moments. It was crazy to have lived it with you. I love you all! Thank you, God, for making me Argentine. Vamos Argentina!"

Messi added that the recent passing of his father, Jorge, had only served to reinforce his decision. He will continue to play for his club side, Inter Miami, in MLS. He signed a contract extension there last year, which runs until 2028.

Results

Football

Premier League

Aston Villa (0) **0** **Arsenal** (0) **1**

Saka 59

Enterprise National League

Boston United 2 Hornchurch 3; Carlisle United 4 Scunthorpe United 2; Eastleigh 1 Aldershot Town 1; Forest Green Rovers 1 Altrincham 2; Harrogate Town 2 Gateshead 1; Kidderminster Harriers 1 Barrow 1; Solihull Moors 1 Fylde 3; Sutton United 0 Wealdstone 2; Woking 1 Southend United 1; Worthing 2 Boreham Wood 3; Yeovil Town 3 Tamworth 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Boreham Wood	5	4	1	0	14	7	7	13
Sutton United	5	4	0	1	7	3	4	12
Hornchurch	5	4	0	1	10	7	3	12
Yeovil	5	3	2	0	10	5	5	11
Harrogate Town	5	3	1	1	13	9	4	10
Fylde	5	3	1	1	11	7	4	10
Southend	5	3	1	1	9	6	3	10
Eastleigh	5	3	1	1	7	5	2	10
Carlisle	5	2	2	1	12	8	4	8
Aldershot	5	2	2	1	6	4	2	8
Kiddrmnstr	5	2	2	1	6	6	0	8
Hartlepool	4	2	0	2	4	3	1	6
Boston United	5	2	0	3	6	6	0	6
Worthing	5	2	0	3	9	10	-1	6
Altrincham	5	2	0	3	5	7	-2	6
Forest Green	5	2	0	3	6	10	-4	6
Wealdstone	5	1	2	2	6	7	-1	5
Scunthorpe	5	1	1	3	8	10	-2	4
Tamworth	5	1	1	3	10	14	-4	4
Woking	5	1	1	3	4	9	-5	4
FC Halifax	4	1	0	3	8	9	-1	3
Gateshead	5	1	0	4	4	8	-4	3
Barrow	5	0	2	3	5	9	-4	2
Solihull Moors	5	0	0	5	5	16	-11	0

Tennis

US Open: Women's singles: First round A Sabalenka (Bela) bt C Osorio (Col) 6-2, 6-4; S Kenin (US) bt V Williams (US) 6-2, 7-6 (8-6); A Anisimova (US) bt A Krueger (US) 6-1, 6-3; E Svitolina (Ukraine) bt S Sierra (Arg) 6-1, 6-2; K Muchova (Cz) bt S Kraus (Austria) 6-3, 6-0; E Navarro (US) bt L Boisson (Fr) 7-6 (8-6), 6-7 (1-7), 6-3; C Bucsa (Sp) bt S Bejlek (Cz) 7-5, 4-6, 6-1; M Sawangkaew (Thai) bt P Udvary (Hun); M Bouzkova (Cz) bt E Jacquemot (Fr) 6-2, 6-2; H Dart (GB) bt P Stearns (US) 3-6, 6-3, 6-2; L Tagger (Austria) bt T Korpatsch (Ger) 6-0, 7-6 (7-4); K Birrell (Aus) bt P Marcinko (Cro) 3-6, 7-6 (7-4), 6-3; H Sakatsume (Japan) bt A Kalinina (Ukraine) 6-3, 6-3; O Selekhmeteva (Sp) bt A Ito (Japan) 6-2, 6-4; Qinwen Zheng (China) bt K Liutova (Russ) 4-6, 6-3, 6-1; A Kalinskaya (Russ) bt A Blinkova (Russ) 6-4, 6-3; T Townsend (US) bt M Chwalinska (Pol) 6-2, 6-3; M Timofeeva (Uzb) bt T Zidansek (Slovenia) 6-3, 7-5.

Men's singles: First round M Navone (Arg) bt N Djokovic (Serbia) 7-6 (7-5), 5-7, 4-6, 6-2, 6-1; S Tsitsipas (Gr) bt A Fils (Fr) 4-6, 7-6 (7-3), 6-1, 6-4; A Bublik (Kaz) bt JJ Wolf (US) 6-4, 6-2, 3-6, 6-1; A Mannarino (Fr) bt T Agustin Tirante (Arg) 6-4, 6-3, 3-6, 3-6, 3-6; V Vacherot (Mon) bt A Kovacevic (US) 6-2, 6-3, 7-5; A Rublev (Russ) bt O Virtanen (Fin) 6-7 (5-7), 6-7 (0-7), 6-0, 6-2, 7-6 (10-5); A Vukic (Aus) bt R Sakamoto (Japan) 6-4, 6-7 (5-7), 6-4, 3-6, 6-4; S Gorzny (US) bt R Collignon (Bel) 3-6, 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (11-9); C Alcaraz (Sp) bt R Safiullin (Russ) 6-4, 6-4, 6-4; J Rodionov (Austria) bt G Mpetshi Perricard (Fr) 7-6 (7-2), 6-0, 7-6 (7-4).

Snooker

The British Open: Cheltenham: Qualifying round one (Eng unless stated) D Gilbert bt M Williams 4-0; S Murphy bt R Evans 4-0; Ding Junhui (China) bt A Kazakov (Ukraine) 4-0; B Hawkins bt Deng Haohui (China) 4-0; K Wilson bt F Nussle 4-1; Wu Yize (China) bt Liu Hongyu (China); M Joyce bt M Baranowski (Pol) 4-1; J Trump bt D Emery (Wal) 4-2; Wang Xinbo (China) bt P Whelan 4-1.

Fixtures

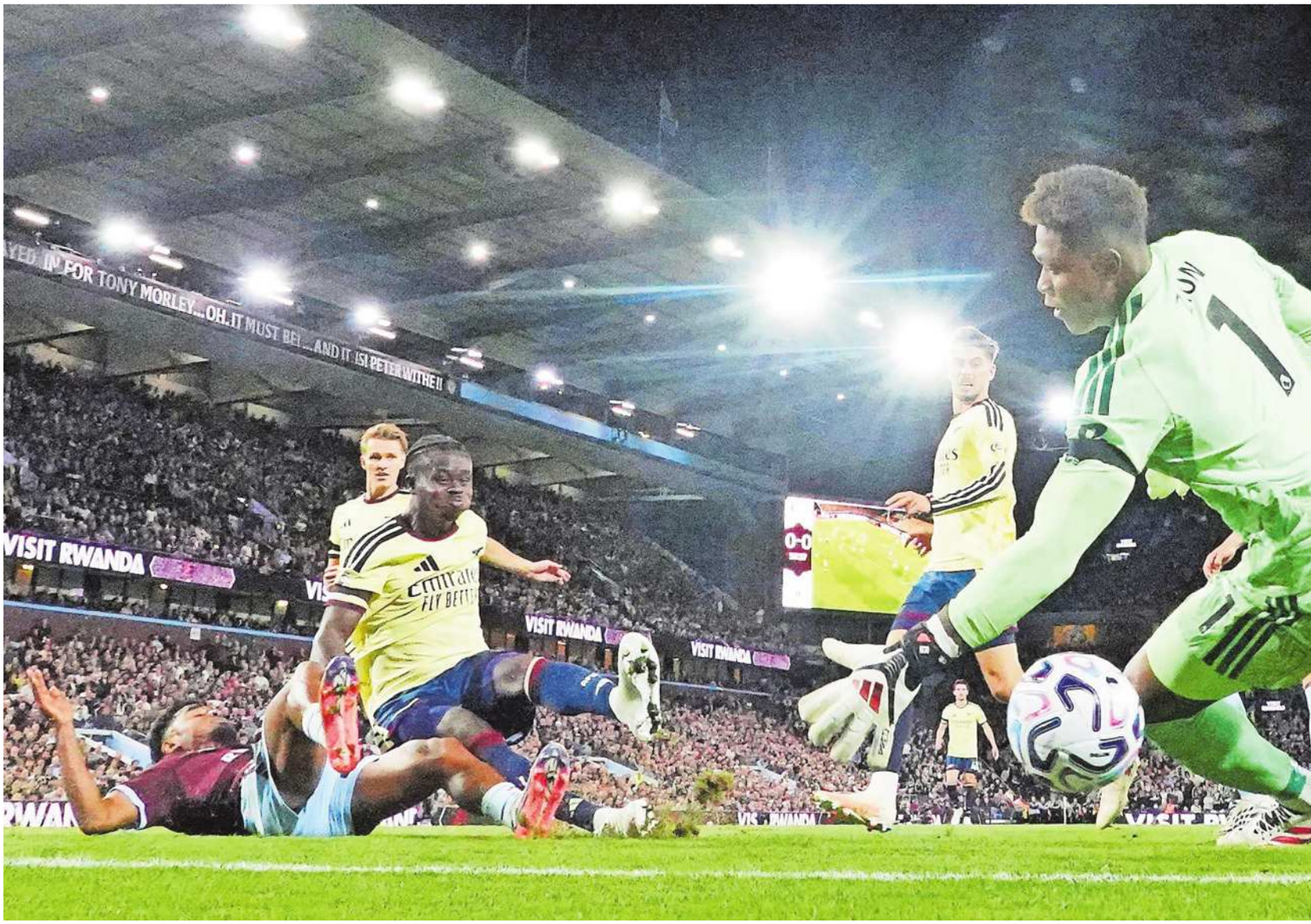
Football

Kick-off 7.45 unless stated

Sky Bet Championship Birmingham v Southampton (8.0); Lincoln City v Blackburn; Portsmouth v Derby; Preston v Bristol City; Sheffield United v Bolton; Stoke v Norwich (8.0); Swansea v Watford; West Ham v Wolves. **League One** Bradford v Cambridge United; Bromley v Leyton Orient; Doncaster v Notts County; Huddersfield v Oxford United; Leicester v Plymouth; Peterborough v Stevenage; Wycombe v Sheffield Wednesday. **League Two** Accrington v Grimsby; Bristol Rovers v Colchester; Cheltenham v York City; Chesterfield v Gillingham; Crewe v Walsall; Exeter v Barnet; Fleetwood Town v Oldham; Northampton v Crawley Town; Rochdale v Shrewsbury; Salford City v Newport County; Swindon v Port Vale; Tranmere v Rotherham. **Enterprise National League** FC Halifax Town v Hartlepool.

Cricket

Women's One Day International Series Scotland v Netherlands (11.0); England v Ireland (1.0).



Saka beats Suzuki from close range for his second league goal of the season at Villa Park last night from Calafiori's cut-back, after Eze had expertly played in the Italian. Saka's finish extended Arsenal's

Saka rewards Arsenal's game

Charlotte Duncker

Aston Villa	**0**
Arsenal *Saka 59*	**1**

Arsenal had to be patient as they showed their title-winning mentality to edge past Aston Villa and maintain their impressive start to the season.

With the state of the two sides heading into this game, many had predicted a walkover for Mikel Arteta's team, but nobody should be naive enough to write off an organised Unai Emery side, no matter what period of transition they might be going through.

This was not the attractive free-flowing attacking display we saw from the champions on the opening day but perhaps it was just as accomplished in a very different way. When things did not work out for them they pushed and probed and kept trying until they found a way through.

Bukayo Saka was there again to pounce and give Arsenal the three points but this was a performance that was about more than just the goal instincts of their No 7.

"I prefer to talk about the squad," Arteta said when asked about another Saka goal. "It was a squad victory today, everyone that was involved in the game in any capacity made a difference for us and that's a big message for all of us. With the depth and the quality we really made that count and that will be a massive weapon for us."

The visiting side had used last season's defeat here to motivate themselves before kick-off but they were facing a Villa team that were very different from the one they lost to in December. It is a Villa team that is as much a work in progress as the demolished North Stand, which is vacant this season as they redevelop it to increase the capacity to 50,000, many thought it would be as convincing an attacking display as Arsenal had shown against Manchester City in the Community Shield and Coventry City on the opening day.

The partly demolished stand, which had seven men standing in hi-vis jackets with hard hats on waiting to collect stray balls, feels like a metaphor for the team playing here. But there were no excuses from Emery's side as they looked to right the wrongs of the hammering by Brighton & Hove Albion.

Konsa came on for his Arsenal debut last night – against his former club

Where Villa have lost the core of their team Arsenal have spent the summer building on theirs in a bid to retain their crown. How envious Emery must be of what Arteta is being able to build, with Arsenal's bench looking formidable, even without any potential last-minute deadline day additions.

"We are trying to improve the squad and until tomorrow night we will continue to try to do that," Arteta said about potential incomings. "I've been disconnected for 24 hours to focus on the match but I will get back on it now."

Their only new signing that started, Christos Tzolis, had a difficult first half as he struggled in his battle against Matty Cash and after an early yellow card he was hooked at half-time and replaced by Eberechi Eze.

Arsenal thought they had been given a lifeline. Declan Rice played it through to Saka but Ian Maatsen barged him to the floor and Jarred Gillett pointed to the spot. VAR advised that the offence took place outside of the box, the decision was changed to a free kick and Martin Odegaard curled just wide.

Then came that breakthrough. Gabriel played the ball to Eze who

How they stand

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Man City	2	2	0	0	6	2	4	6
Arsenal	2	2	0	0	4	0	4	6
Hull	2	2	0	0	3	0	3	6
Chelsea	2	2	0	0	7	5	2	6
Brentford	2	1	1	0	4	1	3	4
Newcastle	2	1	1	0	4	2	2	4
Everton	2	1	1	0	3	1	2	4
Leeds	2	1	1	0	2	1	1	4
Brighton	2	1	0	1	7	4	3	3
Man United	2	1	0	1	5	4	1	3
Sunderland	2	1	0	1	2	2	0	3
Ipswich	2	1	0	1	4	6	-2	3
Liverpool	2	0	2	0	4	4	0	2
Bournemouth	2	0	1	1	2	3	-1	1
Nott'm Forest	2	0	1	1	2	3	-1	1
Fulham	2	0	0	2	2	4	-2	0
Coventry	2	0	0	2	0	4	-4	0
Crystal Palace	2	0	0	2	1	6	-5	0
Aston Villa	2	0	0	2	0	5	-5	0
Tottenham	2	0	0	2	0	5	-5	0

DAVID KLEIN/REUTERS

winning start to a title defence that continues with Chelsea's visit on Sunday

# of patience

expertly waited for Riccardo Calafiori to make the run in behind and the full back pulled it across the face of goal. Just as he was on the opening day against Coventry, Saka was there to pounce and put Arsenal ahead. Their patience had been rewarded.

Then came the reinforcements for Arteta as he looked to see the game out. Bruno Guimarães, on for his debut, accompanied by Mikel Merino. Emery rolled the dice with Tammy Abraham, Alysson and Alejandro Garnacho as they went searching for an equaliser but that was always going to be a tough ask against a side who are so excellent at the back and who had a solid midfield trio of Rice, Guimarães and Merino.

Even if Villa's attack had been firing they would have struggled. For the first time in the Premier League since May 2016 they ended the game having failed to register a shot on target at home. Given the goals they have lost in the team during this window that cannot be the biggest surprise.

"Painful, to lose is painful and to lose in Villa Park is not normal in my four years here," Emery said. "But through how we played and competed, that is the way we want to build. The debut of some players was fantastic.

"Hopefully, we try to have a good deep squad for all the challenges we'll face this year. We were patient four years ago, three years ago, two years ago and last year. We weren't completely feeling strong in everything and confident with each player knowing their task. Now we're in this process again but I'm happy with how we competed.

"We are happy how we are closing the transfer window. We are not regretting anything. The players we have joining should be enough to build the team again with the structure we want."

Jackson and Zion Suzuki are giving Emery hope and with Taylor Harwood-Bellis and Ibrahim Mbaye set to be confirmed today Villa's tally of arrivals will rise to ten. Just how quickly Emery can get them clicking will determine how successful they can be.

For Arteta it is only small tweaks needed to an already winning formula.

Aston Villa (4-2-3-1): Z Suzuki — M Cash (A Wan-Bissaka 78min), V Lindelof, P Torres, I Maatsen — B Kamara, R Barkley (A Garnacho 78) — J McGinn, E Buendía, G Hemmings (Alysson 71) — N Jackson (T Abraham 71). **Booked** Alysson, McGinn, Maatsen.
Arsenal (4-3-3) D Raya — B White, C Mosquera (E Konsa 79), Gabriel, R Calafiori — M Odegaard (M Merino 71), M Lewis-Skelly (B Guimarães 71), D Rice (M Zubimendi 85) — B Saka, K Havertz, C Tzolis (E Eze 46). **Booked** Tzolis.
Referee J Gillett.

City to sign Ndiaye for £65m – and Fernández could be next

Paul Hirst, Paul Joyce, Peter Rutzler

ROBBIE JAY BARRATT/AMA/GETTY IMAGES

Ndiaye pushed for a move to City once it became clear that they were interested

Manchester City have beaten Tottenham Hotspur to the signing of Iliman Ndiaye, who is set to join from Everton in a £65 million deal.

After the collapse of their move for Liverpool's Cody Gakpo, City turned their attention to Ndiaye and last night agreed a deal that involves a down-payment of £60million, plus another £5million in add-ons.

It is a blow to Spurs, who had agreed a £60 million fee with Everton for Ndiaye on Sunday morning, but the 26-year-old Senegal winger decided to see if other clubs came in for him and as soon as it became clear that City wanted him, he pushed for a move to the Etihad Stadium.

Ndiaye will become a City player today, provided that he passes a medical and there are no problems with the paperwork.

City also hope to add Enzo Fernández to their squad on deadline day from Chelsea in what would be a potential £120 million-plus deal with the London club. The 25-year-old Argentina player is understood to be desperate to be reunited with his former manager Enzo Maresca at the Etihad.

Yesterday City announced the signing of Allan, the Brazilian winger, from Palmeiras. City will pay an initial fee of £32.1 million for the 22-year-old, who has signed a five-year contract, and have committed to paying an additional £2.1 million in add-ons.

City were left short on the right flank after the £85 million sale of Sávio to Tottenham Hotspur and decided that Allan was the right man to replace him.

Allan, who is left-footed, can also play on the left wing and in central midfield. He has played 96 times for Palmeiras and this season has scored nine goals in all competitions for the club, who are top of the Brazilian league.

Meanwhile, Everton have agreed a deal in the region of £40 million with Monaco for striker Folarin Balogun in a move that casts growing doubt over Richarlison's potential return to the club.

David Moyes wanted the USA striker to beef up his attack — after Beto joined Fiorentina yesterday for about £15.5 million — and the 25-year-old will now complete the formalities of the transfer.

Jack Grealish remains the subject of discussions between Everton and Manchester City over a second loan spell at the Hill Dickinson Stadium.

Fulham's Kenny Tete, 30, is a target to end the long-running search for a right back. He would cost £9 million.

Adam Aznou, the left back, has joined Málaga on loan. Tim Iroegbunam, the Everton midfielder, is close to joining Hull City in a deal that would be worth an initial £12 million.

Everton are unlikely to sign both Balogun and Richarlison and it is understood the Brazil international is also mulling over other offers to leave Tottenham Hotspur.

Richarlison, 29, is thought to have interest from Turkey.

Spurs close in on loan move for Mudryk

Peter Rutzler

Tottenham Hotspur are closing in on a loan move for Chelsea's Ukraine winger Mykhailo Mudryk.

Mudryk returned to football in July after the resolution of his anti-doping rule violation, having spent 20 months on the sidelines, and since then has been rebuilding his fitness, playing a part in Chelsea's pre-season tour to Asia.

However, the 25-year-old's first-team opportunities were expected to be limited this season and a loan move has been decided as the best pathway by all parties.

Roberto De Zerbi, the Tottenham head coach, worked with Mudryk at Shakhtar Donetsk and remains a huge fan of the player.

Speaking after it was confirmed that the winger would be able to return to play, De Zerbi told the media during Spurs' pre-season tour to Australia that he felt Mudryk was like "another son" to him.

"Hopefully he can show what he suffered in the last two years in the next season," De Zerbi said. "Maybe not against Tottenham. But he is a lovely guy. He's a very, very good player."

Mudryk has multiple loan options to stay in the Premier League, while Strasbourg, Chelsea's sister club, also remain an option.

Leeds United had a loan bid rejected this month but retain their interest, while Sunderland also consider him to be an option.

Tottenham and Chelsea have agreed a deal for the permanent transfer of Tosin Adarabioyo. Tosin went to Stamford Bridge on a free transfer from Fulham in 2024 and was regarded as a leadership figure in the Chelsea squad, but fell down the pecking order following the signing of Maxence Lacroix from Crystal Palace.

Chelsea goalkeeper Robert Sánchez is in talks to join Serie A side Como on loan. Sánchez lost his place in the team following the opening game of the season, where a shaky display pushed the club to signing a new first-choice goalkeeper in Emiliano Martínez. It is understood that work still needs to be done to complete the loan deal, and it may be touch and go to the deadline.

Zirkzee on verge of joining Juventus

Paul Hirst, Peter Rutzler, Gary Jacob, Charlotte Duncker, Martin Hardy

Joshua Zirkzee is hopeful of leaving Manchester United before the transfer window closes today, and Juventus are now leading the race for the Dutchman's signature.

Juventus, Fiorentina and another unnamed club have contacted both United and Zirkzee's representatives in the past few days, after the 25-year-old made it clear that he wants to leave.

Zirkzee turned down Fiorentina because he preferred Juventus and the Italian club are negotiating with United over a 12-month loan deal, which would include an option or obligation to buy the player for about £25 million.

United are demanding a loan fee too, thought to be about £4.3 million, for the Netherlands forward, who joined United from Bologna for £36.5 million two years ago.

Crystal Palace are signing the 18-year-old centre back Honest Ahanor on loan from Atalanta. Ahanor, who has agreed to join Chelsea for £40 million on a pre-agreement, will spend the season at Palace before his move to Stamford Bridge.

Arsenal are exploring a move for the Lyon and Belgium winger Malick Fofana, who has attracted interest from Crystal Palace, Sunderland and RB Leipzig. The 21-year-old has scored twice in six matches this season for the French club, who probably need to sell after missing out on Champions League qualification.

Newcastle United are close to completing the signing of the 21-year-old Belgium international Matias Fernandez-Pardo in a deal that could be worth more than £55 million. Nick Woltemade will leave to complete a season-long loan to Juventus today.

Sunderland have agreed a deal to sign the Tottenham Hotspur centre back Kevin Danso. **Nottingham Forest** have announced the signing of Daniel Muñoz from Palace after agreeing a £22 million deal for the 30-year-old full back. Omari Hutchinson, 22, has left Forest to join AC Milan on loan for the season, with the Italian side having an option to make the deal permanent.

Sport

'We cost lads call-ups'

Sale boss on dire 2025-26 and why England must pick Lawes

Alex Sanderson interview, page 45

Hardest climbs ... blind

Briton on his close shaves and leading with 'crumbled retina'

Jesse Dufton interview, page 44

STUART MACFARLANE/ARSENAL FC/GETTY IMAGES

Saka strikes as champions grind out win

Winger scores game's only goal as Arsenal beat Unai Emery's organised Aston Villa 1-0 in Premier League, pages 50-51

Pakistan send seven home

Head coach and assistant 'released' and seven players axed after resounding defeats by England

Elizabeth Ammon

Pakistan's Test team are embroiled in chaos after sacking their head coach and assistant coach, and sending home seven of their squad having suffered two big losses to surrender the series to England.

Sarfaraz Ahmed, the head coach, and his assistant, Umar Gul, have been "released" and will be replaced by the white-ball coach, Mike Hesson, and assistant coach, Ashley Noffke.

The players sent home include the wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan, bowlers Ali Usman, Khurram Shahzad and Salman Ali Agha, who captained Pakistan in the first Test in the absence of Babar Azam. Imam-ul-Haq, who did not bat in the second Test because of a calf injury, has also been sent home along with Aamir Jamal and Awais Zafar.

Reports suggest that some of the players were not informed by the Pakistan management and only found out they were being dropped via social media.

Seven replacements have been called into their squad, including four uncapped players, for the third Test, which starts at Edgbaston on September 9. Among the players announced as replacements are the batsmen Saim Ayub and Abdullah Fazal, who have played eight and two Tests respectively, while the left-arm spinner Arafat Minhas has played three ODIs and four T20Is. The seven players will arrive in England this week. Hesson, the former New Zealand head coach, is already in London for a visit that was arranged before these sweeping changes.

It is not unusual for there to be dramatic or bizarre decisions from the heavily politicised Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). On the first day of the Lord's Test, it threatened to prevent its players from taking the field for the afternoon session in protest against a

Continued on page 48

£65m Ndiaye chooses City

Paul Joyce, Paul Hirst

Manchester City have beaten Tottenham Hotspur to the signing of Iliman Ndiaye, who is set to join from Everton in a £65 million deal.

City had indicated they were prepared to pay £80 million for Liverpool's Cody Gakpo but a lack of time for the Merseyside club to find a replacement means he is set to stay at Anfield. Liverpool confirmed the signing of the forward Bradley Barcola for £123 million from Paris Saint-Germain yesterday.

With Gakpo set to stay, City turned their attention to Everton's Ndiaye, who had been expected to move to Spurs after a £60 million fee was agreed.

Richarlison had been slated to return to Everton from Tottenham for £35 million but that move is doubtful after Everton agreed to sign Folarin Balogun for about £40 million from Monaco.

Deadline day, pages 49•51

Argentina star Messi retires

Peter Rutzler

Lionel Messi has announced he is retiring from international football.

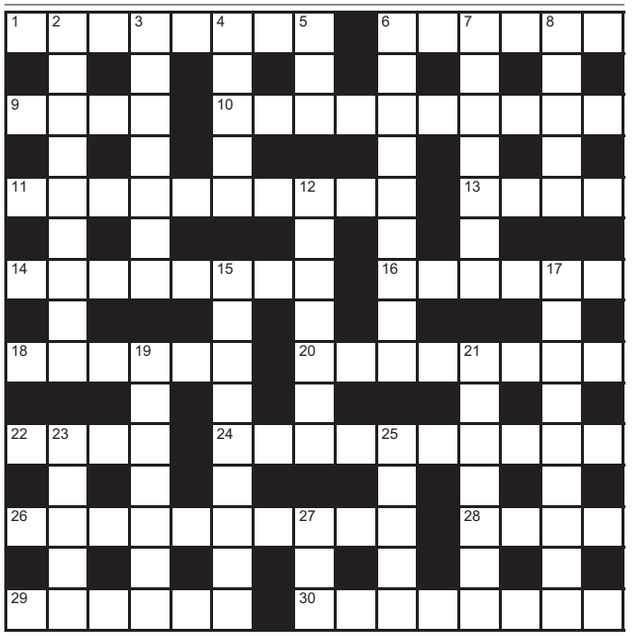
The Argentinian great, who won the World Cup with his country in 2022, confirmed in an emotional statement on social media that he will be stepping away from the national team at the age of 39, saying that it was a decision that "hurts deep in my soul".

Messi made his debut for Argentina in 2005 and went on to become his country's all-time leading scorer, with 125 goals, and their most-capped player, with 207 appearances. Only Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo has scored more goals in international football.

In addition to his World Cup triumph, Messi won two Copa Américas, in 2021 and 2024. The eight-times Ballon d'Or winner also finished

Continued on page 49

Times Crossword 29,636



ACROSS

1 Trademark gags in a humorous conversation (8)
6 State of country reflected delay (6)
9 Plant right within wetland (4)
10 As eyelids may be when about to conk out? (2,3,5)
11 Even money in Liverpool's banks capped? (5-5)
13 Worried about pole, stake taken up? (4)
14 Red, sensual dresses I had sent back (8)
16 Kind of prepossessing (6)
18 Bob hit boxer? (3-3)
20 Judge, smart, arranging meeting (8)
22 Laid-back giant scrubbing back — busy? (2,2)
24 Barely inept, they had failed — as half-witted ex-husband and father-in-law? (10)
26 Exhilarated, top athlete (4,6)
28 Reporter's robust greeting (4)
29 Salted crackers remained fresh (6)
30 Farm machinery, big hit (8)

DOWN

2 Heather last seen in tavern opening a second drink (9)
3 On fire editing novel (7)
4 Cold Indian vegetable with trace of fat (5)
5 Put away in the attic (3)
6 Finance young moneybags, footballing talent (5-4)
7 Scottish hero, squash champion? (7)
8 Where little intelligence is to be found, eh? (5)
12 Considered advice for writer (4,3)
15 Reporter, hack originally into contemporary music? (9)
17 Orangey red mist can start to envelop downs (9)
19 Note beneath temple, cave! (5,2)
21 Mouth mostly holds long, breathing apparatus (7)
23 Significant part of Russia thawing was seen periodically (5)
25 Forward almost missing end of season (5)
27 Pickles are horrid, first of all — yuck! (3)

Yesterday's solution 29,635

E	X	T	E	R	M	I	N	A	T	I	O	N		
B	R	E	N		P		N	O		O				
B	R	A	D	A	W	L		P	U	N	S	T	E	R
S		F	R	E		A		E		W		T		
	N	A	R	R	A	T	O	R		R	E	I	C	H
		L		A				A			T		O	
V	E	G	A	N		W	A	T	E	R	S	H	E	D
I		A	G		R	U		A		S		O		
L	A	R	C	E	N	O	U	S		D	E	T	O	X
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N	I	Q	A	B		G	L	A	N	C	I	N	G	
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S		R		G	O		C	I		N		U		
		E	L	E	C	T	R	I	C	O	R	G	A	N

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TIMES 2

September 1 | 2026

I know the reason for the rise in autism

(Trust me, I'm a doctor on the spectrum)

Dr Mary Doherty, founder of Autistic Doctors International

Conservatory? We call it the sieve. Welcome to my humble mansion...

Robert Crampton

HM Revenue & Customs mansion tax inspectors are set to start roaming the country from 2028, empowered to enter our homes to sniff out conservatories, big garages or a decent view, the better to jack up the taxable value. I'm on record as saying these snoopers should be denied entry, partly because the £200 fine incurred is bearable, mostly because what's proposed is a gross violation of privacy.

And yet, should one of these bean-counters succeed in mounting their invasion of homes suspected to be worth £2 million or more, it's prudent to have a back-up plan. My idea is to behave like the world's worst estate agent, relentlessly accentuating the negative.

We'll start in the hall. "Poky, isn't it? Gloomy as well. Might as well not be here." Next we turn right into a small sitting room. "Surprisingly unspacious, don't you reckon, Mr Taxman? Also, are you getting those notes of cat pee? They lived in here as kittens — 18 months on and we still can't get rid of the smell. Bless 'em, but those two cheeky incontinent furballs must knock 50 grand off, minimum. Each."

Next door, the downstairs convenience: "Very inconvenient, in fact, with the light switch not being in the actual loo. My son plunges me into darkness whenever I'm making a call of nature. Bog might as well be in the garden. If the garden weren't so damned small.

"Here's the kitchen. Tap leaks. Poor ventilation. Fire hazard. What's that? Well, yes, I suppose it does have a nice view of the park, if you can call some drunk having a slash behind that tree 'nice', because from here he's not behind it, is he, he's in front. Worse during Covid, mind. Giant outdoor lavatory then, it was. Grim scenes.

"And here's the main room. Yes, it certainly does have a glass roof... You might call it a conservatory. Mate, I'd call it a sieve. Buckets everywhere when it rains, furnace in summer, freezer in winter. Single-skin brick. Single-pane glass. Nightmare. I keep meaning to pull the whole thing down and start again. Or maybe just wall it up, pretend it's not there. Put that on your form, will you?

"Here's the first floor. Two

A London townhouse (not Robert's)

bedrooms, one bathroom. Except that one's not exactly a bedroom, not since my daughter moved out [sniff]. Yes, there's an even better view of the hipsters urinating in the playground from here, I agree. Out the back it's a different story, unless you're into railway lines, scrapyards and a massive noodle factory."

Top floor, master bedroom with en suite. "Poor water pressure. Noisy when the police chopper is up. Overlooked on one side, hence the net curtains — commuters into Liverpool Street don't want to see me in my pants. Out front, a good vantage point to watch foxes fighting and shagging. Or people fighting and shagging, come to that."

Back downstairs, and into a single-storey side extension housing two home offices, "which definitely couldn't be considered extra bedrooms. No heating, tin roof, practically a shanty this bit. The garden? Well, you say garden, I say 'yard'. Or patio. Pocket patio. Liable to flood when fatbergs from the noodle factory back up the shared soil pipe. Not pretty. Medieval, you might say. Indeed, as regards your valuation, a medieval price would, I think, be fair. Worth a few groats for the plot, perhaps, but nothing more. OK? I'll see you out."

Listen up, young workers

Research for Alan Milburn's forthcoming report into young Neets (the one million 18 to 24-year-olds not in education, employment or training) has found that the youngsters themselves and their prospective employers think they lack the so-called soft skills needed at work. These include communication, decision-making, organisation, adaptability and resilience. Only a third of Neets feel ready for work when leaving full-time education.

No doubt schools should prepare kids better for jobs. In the meantime, here's my interim advice. First off, turn up. On time. All the time. Day in, day out, month in, month out. Second, keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth, mostly, shut. If you do open it, speak clearly and confidently but, mostly, concisely. Third, always agree with your boss. The boss is always right, even when she's wrong. That's the correct definition of being the boss.

Lastly, it is vital to understand that, in the private sector at least, the aim of the enterprise, whatever anyone might say different, is to make money. Follow these guidelines and you won't go too far wrong. You're welcome.

Lay off the lanyard wearers

The Home Office is getting it in the neck, and indeed around the neck, for spending £4,000 on branded lanyards and tote bags over the past three years. Call me a spendthrift, but that doesn't sound like much. Surely there's nothing wrong with a government department ordering a bit of corporate merch to fly the flag in public and promote esprit de corps in house?

I don't hold with lanyards myself, preferring to keep my office pass tucked in my back pocket. But I've nothing against the kids and keenos who proudly display their allegiance. Not on the bus, train or Tube, though. Or the pub. Or on weekends. That's taking it too far.

The Home Office is being lambasted for buying a load of pens too. Bit unfair. We disdain civil servants as a bunch of pen-pushers then slag them off for securing the tools of their trade. Harsh.

'Why has autism rocketed? We were always here'

The number of people diagnosed as on the spectrum isn't at all inflated, says Mary Doherty, the founder of Autistic Doctors International. By Andrew Billen

When Dame Uta Frith entertained me there this month with coffee and a home-baked cake, her bookish north London home did not seem easily mistakable for a hornets' nest.

Frith, who at 85 is one of the country's pioneers of autism research, was in the news for something she had said before, but never with such clarity as in her new essay for the journal Psychological Medicine.

In it, she claimed that far too many people were being diagnosed, or as she would say misdiagnosed, as autistic: a ninefold increase in the 20 years since 1998, according to one study. The autistic "spectrum", a theoretical concept Frith helped to construct had, she said, collapsed to the point of "diagnostic meaninglessness".

To illustrate this, she told me that Chris Packham, the wildlife presenter who 21 years ago was diagnosed with what was then called Asperger's syndrome, could not be autistic in her opinion because his brilliance at communication was a "blatant contra-indication". Perhaps, on reflection, when she said that I did distantly perceive the faint buzz of wasp.

Packham subsequently told The Times that not knowing he was autistic had caused him enormous mental issues and, no, he did not think the condition was overdiagnosed. The journalist Florence Leslie later wrote in these pages that while she agreed with some of Frith's points, her autism diagnosis had allowed her to accept herself and no longer feel like a failure. A reader wrote gently chiding me for writing that Frith was far too sociable to be on any spectrum herself: her own autistic daughter was "warm, funny and kind".

On the other hand, two people told me of family members they felt had been wrongly diagnosed as autistic. One correspondent was an "upset and concerned" former paediatric nurse: "At no time has my daughter displayed any autism characteristics and I am sitting here wondering how a diagnosis can be made from one assessment with no parent present to confirm my (adult) child's account of their childhood."

If Frith was outspoken, so is Mary Doherty, an Irish consultant anaesthetist now affiliated to University College Dublin's school of medicine. Autistic herself, in 2019 she launched Autistic Doctors International, which began with seven members and now has 1,500. With eight other practitioners she has just submitted to Psychological Medicine a riposte to Frith warning that, if put into practice uncritically, her theories could harm autistic people.

Doherty speaks to me on Zoom from the back of her car from the southwest Irish coast, the soothing commentary of its waves failing to quell entirely her outrage at Frith. "She's completely wrong. She is just so wrong it's not funny. And it's embarrassing for her."

But Frith does not deny autism; she wants to chisel away at autism as a monolithic, coverall diagnosis. For her it makes little sense to group together, even loosely, children with a profound inability to read how others think with much more able adults. Some, she thinks, turn to autism to explain quite usual feelings of being bad at building relationships. Frith wonders whether others are misguidedly inspired by those brilliant autistic detectives we see on TV. Yet for Doherty, heroes such as *The Bridge*'s Saga Noren have merely allowed people to recognise themselves and do so without shame.

COVER AND BELOW: TOM JACKSON FOR THE TIMES

Mary Doherty

It was unprofessional, she thinks, for Frith to question Packham's autism. "There is absolutely no way I would dream of speculating about somebody's diagnosis," she says. In any case, to her, Packham's autism is obvious. "As autistic people, we recognise each other. We just do, you know? Not all the time. It's not infallible. But there are certain things about being autistic — if you see somebody doing something, or a way of speaking or even a way of thinking — you just recognise it."

Has Frith damaged just her own reputation or has she unleashed a backlash against society's increased acceptance of autism? "Both. It's not the beginning. This backlash has been happening for a while, and it is a backlash because, suddenly, articulate autistic people are speaking out."

But Frith is less interested in people speaking out about who they really are. She would prefer their symptoms to be objectively assessed. Part of the huge increase in diagnoses, she thinks, could be down to people filling in their own medical questionnaires, for self-reporting is inherently fallible.

"Well, is it?" Doherty says. "Because you know what's interesting about all this? It's that traditionally the diagnostic process [of autism] has been based on behaviour, with absolutely no taking into account of internal experience. It's the only diagnosis I can think of in the whole mental health field where that would be the case. If somebody is experiencing anxiety or psychosis or OCD [obsessive compulsive disorder], you want to know what's going on internally. You want to know how they feel. You want to know what they're thinking."

> **"Autism isn't a brain difference — it's a whole-body difference**

So why have rates of diagnosis rocketed? Why are there so many autistic people these days? "Why were there so many left-handed people after teachers stopped tying their hands behind their back? Why were there so many gay people after it stopped being criminal? You know, we were always there, always. I mean, how many are we allowed to have?"

I ask her to give her best estimate of the proportion of autistic people in a population. "Probably 3 to 5 per cent," she says. Five years ago the World Health Organisation, I later check, put the number at 0.79 per cent.

Last week it was reported that the amount being spent by the NHS on autism and ADHD diagnoses had risen tenfold in the past year. There are 800,000 people on NHS waiting lists for ADHD assessments and private clinics are charging the NHS up to £3,000 per patient to carry these out. One NHS leader said the "soaring costs are running out of control".

Doherty received her diagnosis in 2013, aged 45. It followed her son's autism diagnosis the same year. Her undiagnosed autism had been debilitating. Although she worked in a hospital as an anaesthetist, when faced with the possibility of having cancer she delayed for a year booking a biopsy by phone because of the unpredictable conversation that would follow. She walked from a waiting room before a consultation because of the "sensory onslaught" of the hospital. (In the end her GP made the appointment for her and her skin cancer was successfully treated.) She worried that being diagnosed autistic might end her medical career but instead found that owning her autism helped her relationships with colleagues. Later she discovered she was "queer". Was that part of the same process?

"I think so, possibly. Yeah, for sure. But from that point of view, I know what it's like to suddenly have a realisation that everything you thought about yourself was wrong? It was glorious. It was wonderful. It was probably the best discovery. It was fantastic. But I wish I'd known years ago, in the same way I wish I'd known years ago that I was autistic."

Her daughter, now 32, was also diagnosed as autistic in adulthood, after six years of "absolute hell" dealing with mental health difficulties. "I know so many people personally, not just my daughter but lots of people, who would have been really heavy users of mental health services: you know, suicide attempts, self-harm, serious mental illness. And then they get an accurate autism diagnosis and they thrive."

To summarise Frith and Doherty's disagreement, the question seems to me to be whether autism indeed covers a spectrum or whether autistic symptoms are so different and their intensity so variable that some deserve diagnostic categorisations of their own. Doherty, for instance, has met and conversed with non-verbal autistic people but is herself highly articulate and socially skilled. As we talk, her only autistic "tell" would be that she plays with a hairband; this she calls "stimming", although the world contains many neurotypicals who worry with beads or jerk their legs rhythmically when nervous.

Judging autism by how people present is difficult anyway, since many autistic people deliberately mask their autism to fit in. "I often say I speak neurotypical pretty well but it's like a second language," Doherty tells me. Yet as one of the mothers who wrote to me said, autistic people can be naturally funny and warm. Doherty says of herself: "There's a lot about being autistic which I think is kind of bimodal. I think what you find in terms of empathy is there are a lot of us that will be hyper-empathic with really intense empathy. And I am in that category."

For Doherty to be correct that autism is one condition with many shades, across the spectrum there must, surely, be shared characteristics. Frith and she agree that there are probably genetic components to autism (although they disagree on whether or not that makes autism inheritable). Doherty believes autism tends to come with co-morbidities such as gastrointestinal problems, epilepsy, hypermobility and allergies: "The big misconception in the field is that autism is a brain difference. It's not. It's a whole-body difference."

Above all she would say, there is a problem with sensory processing, an intolerance of cacophony, bright lights and unpredictable environments (such as hospitals). "For me, that is without a doubt the most disabling aspect of being autistic. I have no difficulty in identifying as disabled and I absolutely am, and it's mostly because of sensory differences."

And does that apply to every autistic person? "Does anything apply to everybody?" She recalls her "autistic meltdown" a few years ago, a "sensory nightmare" at a venue where she was to give a talk. "It just got to a point where I literally could not access fluent speech. On a really bad day you will not see a difference, in terms of my ability to manage safely to communicate, between me and someone who needs full-time care in that moment."

So when diagnosing someone with autism, a specialist should take into account their worst moments? "Absolutely. Absolutely."

At heart, then, does Doherty believe all autistic people are of the same tribe? "Without a doubt."

As it happens, the week after we speak, Autscape, an annual three-day conference for autistic people, is being held in Hertfordshire. Hundreds attend, and the only guests who will be struggling, Doherty says, are the neurotypicals. Otherwise a party mood prevails in which autistic people stop masking. I ask whether there is some hooking up. "Oh, completely, yes. It's fantastic because the expectations are different. There's no small talk. There's no social niceties. You can be in the middle of a conversation and duck out — it's fine."

An enterprising documentary maker, I think, might ask Frith to go along next year and record what conversations ensued. They might not all be confrontational. Both sides of the argument certainly mean well, and Frith has since written to me to say that she now realises she crossed a line by discussing Chris Packham: "I very much regret what I said." And, Doherty, who has exchanged emails with Frith, says she would love to chat to her. "I do have compassion for her. I do understand where she's coming from. But, ultimately, I think she's completely wrong."

Like Anne, I'm a witchy woman

When most people are irritated by another person, they don't write their name and pop it in the freezer — but that's what Nicole Kidman does, who likes to "freeze" people out of her life. As she explained in a promo interview for her film *Practical Magic 2,* it's a witchy tradition that has been passed down through generations.

It's not just Kidman who has come out of the broom closet: last week Anne Hathaway revealed herself to be a woo-woo woman when she put a tribute to Dolly Parton on Instagram, posting an image of two mason jars filled with "full moon/Jupiter water" that she had "charged" — ie, left out on a full moon to absorb lunar power.

Basically it has been a big week for those, like me, who enjoy candles, crystals and cats. With about 250,000 Instagram posts tagged #woowoo, there's a community of us sharing our weird habits on social media.

My husband will humour me as I witter on about my favourite podcast, *Know Your Aura with Mystic Michaela*, womansplaining his behaviour based on aura colours. "But you're green!" I'll cry out. "That's why you can remember so much about athletics!" He'll nod solemnly, although I assume his mind is elsewhere, probably recalling a Steve Cram race from 1986. He draws the line, though, at accepting that our cat, a black stray who showed up one day unannounced, is my "familiar"; she was just sick of sleeping outdoors, he says. I am unconvinced.

All my friends are up for a bit of witch chat after a glass of wine. I once hired an Etsy witch — an online sorceress selling spells — to help with my career. It cost me £18.50, and she sent me images of the shrine to my future success that had been blessed by a coven of witches. When I told my friend, she responded knowingly: "My TikTok witch worked wonders when my boyfriend was annoying me." She had ordered a "binding spell" to prevent him from negatively affecting her, and it seemingly worked within a day. They did eventually break up.

OK, so did everything a psychic in Selfridges told me last year come to pass? Not exactly. No one cares about the screenplay I wrote six months ago. But with the dreariness that surrounds us, believing in magic can bring some sparkle back to one's life.

Eilidh Dorgan

Anne Hathaway

How to eat for your age — the key

We're all aware of the importance to longevity of a good diet. But as we grow older, specific foods may optimise our constitution. Peta Bee provides a guide

WESTEND61,PETER DAZELEY,KINGA KRZEMINSKA/GETTY IMAGES

You are what you eat but our requirements for nutrients and energy change as we age. "The efficiency with which the gastrointestinal tract absorbs all nutrients deteriorates with age, particularly from our forties onwards, and the efficiency with which our bodies use these nutrients also declines," says Dr Dan McCartney, researcher in the anti-ageing effects of human nutrition at Technological University Dublin. "Some of our research has shown a cumulative effect of poor diet habits that only manifests later on when a tipping point is reached."

Professor Julian Griffin, director of the Rowett Institute, a centre for nutrition and health research at the University of Aberdeen, says scientists are beginning to understand more about how diet impacts health with each passing decade. "It's never too late to make changes," he says. "And what we eat now could impact our health in 10, 15 years." Here's what scientists say we should focus on eating in every decade.

40s
Oily fish to protect the brain

In your thirties

With relatively high lean muscle mass, your body is well equipped to mop up excess blood sugar and clear waste from the liver and kidneys. But as the decade progresses, your choices will need to be more considered. "With age, men and women have a reduced capacity to synthesise vitamin D from sunlight so it's wise to get into the habit of taking a supplement in the winter months," says Dr Linia Patel, a researcher in the department of clinical sciences and community health at the University of Milan.

Men Rhiannon Lambert, registered nutritionist and author of *The Unprocessed Plate*, says men can be late to the party when it comes to embracing dietary diversity. "Rather than simply focusing on getting your five a day, this is an age for men to focus on eating different fruits, vegetables, herbs and spices for a variety of fibres and plant compounds," she says. Red onions, cabbage, figs, kiwi fruit, green beans and lentils will all support gut health, and herbs and spices matter too, so add basil, coriander, turmeric and cinnamon to cooking. Meanwhile zinc (found in seafood, meat, nuts and seeds) and the B vitamins (in leafy greens, wholegrains, eggs and dairy) all enhance male fertility. Cells that make healthy sperm (and eggs) are "recruited" approximately three months before conception, so making changes to diet should start about six months before trying to conceive.

Women Requirements for iron, at 14.8mg per day, are higher for women up to the age of 50 largely because menstruation can use up iron reserves, especially if periods are heavy. Good sources include meat, sardines, watercress, cashew nuts, edamame beans and dried apricots. The NHS recommends that all women of childbearing age take a 400mcg folic acid supplement daily for the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, as it helps to prevent birth defects. "Vitamin B12 intake works in tandem with folic acid," McCartney says. "Low levels of B12 independently raise the risk of neural tube defects, so it is important to get enough." If you are vegetarian, vegan or have switched to mostly plant-based eating, you'll need to supplement with B12, which is found in meat, fish and dairy.

In your forties

Eating more oats, quinoa, walnuts, almonds, chickpeas and kidney beans in your forties may add years to your life expectancy. A study published in Nature by researchers from Harvard, the University of Copenhagen and the University of Montreal found that ramping up your intake of nuts, wholegrains and pulses has a strong influence on your chances of reaching the age of 70 free of significant chronic disease and with cognitive, physical and mental health in order.

Men According to the NHS, a man's risk of heart disease starts to rise significantly in his forties. "Men should start paying particular attention to the quality of the fats in their diet and think about swapping saturated fats such as butter for unsaturated olive or avocado oil," Lambert says. Take stock of your alcohol intake too. An NHS survey found 34 per cent of men in the 45-64 age group drank more than the recommended upper weekly limit of 14 units. Even small reductions can lower blood pressure and help you to shed excess weight, both of which help to protect the heart.

Women Women in their forties have higher baseline levels of inflammation than men, a chronic underlying risk factor for disease later in life. "A real focus on eating a Mediterranean-style diet with olive oil, tomatoes, berries and chia seeds providing polyphenols and other compounds will reduce inflammation," Patel says. Eat more fatty fish, including herrings and sardines, or consider taking an omega-3 supplement. "As a nation we don't eat enough polyunsaturated fatty acids [Pufa], such as the long-chain omega-3 fats EPA and DHA that are found in oily fish," Griffin says. "My own studies have shown that switching high intakes of saturated fat for more Pufa or the monounsaturated fatty acids in olive oil might be good for prevention of late-onset Alzheimer's disease."

50s
Broccoli to lower cholesterol

In your fifties

During this decade our requirement for different nutrients starts to shift. Trying to meet the recommended 30g of daily fibre intake is important (men currently get an average of 21g and women 17g a day, according to the NHS). To boost intake, choose foods rich in soluble fibre such as overnight oats for breakfast, onions, leeks, root vegetables and apples with meals, and make fibre-positive switches such as brown rice instead of white and

changes to maximise your health

30s
More fibre for gut health

potatoes with skins left on.

As we age, the diversity within our gut microbiota changes, and this has been associated with low-grade chronic inflammation and increased susceptibility to disease. Good gut health requires a diverse community of microbes and relies on fibre intake to help them to flourish and to reduce inflammation. "The changes in our microbiome that occur with ageing can have a significant impact on quality of life," says Professor Karen Scott, a lead researcher at the Rowett Institute.

Men Sarcopenia, or the gradual loss of muscle mass, becomes more noticeable in this decade, particularly for men. The body's ability to digest and utilise protein decreases, meaning we need proportionately more of it in our diet to get the same benefits. The approach for protecting muscle mass should be 50 per cent nutrition and 50 per cent exercise. "The stimulus for growth — that is, resistance training — needs to come first, and then you need the protein intake to support the body in maintaining muscle mass," Patel says. Research has suggested intakes of 1-1.2g of protein per kg of body weight, or 1.6g per kg if you are very active at this age. In addition to meat and fish, good sources are tinned tuna (about 24g protein per 100g), eggs (6g per egg), cottage cheese (12g per 100g), lentils and chickpeas (8g per 100g) and Greek yoghurt (up to 10g per 100g).

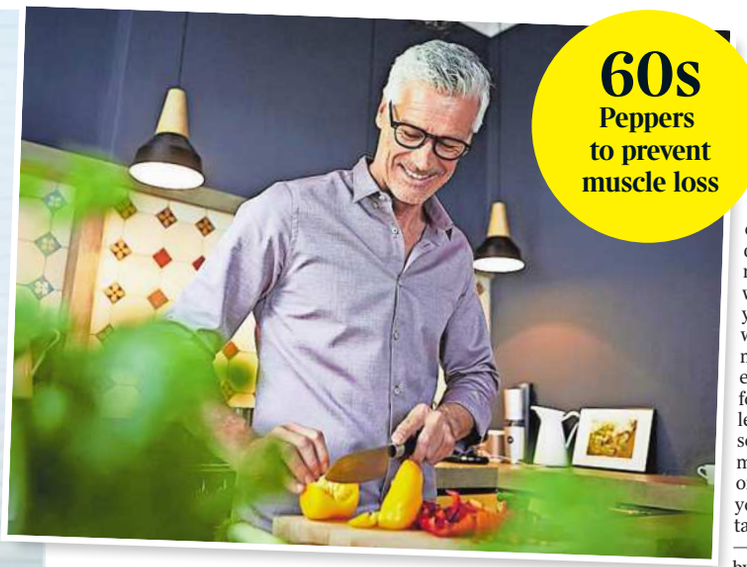
"Timing of protein intake is very important," says Professor Alexandra Johnstone, chair of human nutrition at the Rowett Institute. "Most people in the UK eat the majority of their protein as part of an evening meal, but an 11st man eating the 84g-90g of protein he needs at one meal doesn't activate muscle protein synthesis over the course of a day." Divide your protein intake equally over three or four meals a day to support muscle health.

Women Most women reach menopausal age in their fifties and with that come changes in the way the body uses and stores fat. As oestrogen levels decline, lipid profiles often deteriorate, resulting in significantly raised cholesterol levels. "There is an exponential increase in heart health risk to the same level as men in this decade," Patel says. "Women need to be extra-vigilant with reducing their saturated fat intake, increasing fibre and consuming bitter vegetables that contain natural plant compounds and soluble fibre known to lower cholesterol levels." Rocket, radicchio, kale, endives, Brussels sprouts and broccoli are all good choices.

> "What we eat now could impact our health in 10 to 15 years

In your sixties

Metabolic rate — the speed with which your body uses energy — dips significantly during this period, with the World Health Organisation estimating a decrease of about 2.9 per cent in men and 2 per cent in women over each subsequent decade. This means you may need 200-300 fewer calories per day than you did in your twenties, making you likely to gain weight unless you adjust your diet. But in a double whammy, it also becomes more difficult to get enough nutrients from food, as the body becomes less efficient at absorbing some vitamins and minerals. Replace refined or processed foods where you can and consider taking a daily multivitamin — these have been shown by scientists at Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard, to slow cognitive and biological ageing in the over-sixties.



60s
Peppers to prevent muscle loss

Men You should aim to eat more foods containing vitamin C: citrus fruits, peppers (particularly yellow ones), strawberries, blackcurrants, plums, cherries, kiwi fruit and broccoli are all excellent choices. Consumption helps to defend the cells and tissues from potentially harmful free-radical substances, protecting against disease, but also stalling the loss of muscle mass as you age.

A University of East Anglia study of more than 13,000 people aged between 42 and 82 found that those with the highest amounts of vitamin C in their diet or blood had the greatest estimated muscle mass, compared with those with the lowest amounts. As well as vitamin C, tomatoes have beneficial antioxidant compounds such as lycopene, which helps to protect against many diseases, including prostate cancer. "Cooking tomatoes changes lycopene into a form that can be more easily absorbed by the body, so add them to pasta sauces and stews," Lambert says.

70s
Watermelon to improve hydration

70s
Chicken legs to boost iron

Women Oestrogen supports the bones and, as levels drop, bone tissue is broken down faster than it can be replaced. Since your body's ability to absorb the bone-friendly nutrients — calcium, potassium and vitamins D and K — also drops, your risk of osteoporosis rises. The recommended intake for calcium rises from 700mg to 1,200mg per day after the menopause: cheese, milk, plant milks and dried figs all provide it. Eggs will help with vitamin D, and brown rice has bone-friendly magnesium, while eating five or six prunes a day will provide vitamin K and plant compounds that have been shown to improve bone health.

"Women have smaller livers and less lean tissue to dissipate and dilute the effects of alcohol," McCartney adds. "This gets worse with ageing as the liver loses capacity to metabolise alcohol effectively." The upshot? Hangovers are likely to be more severe. You have been warned.

In your seventies and beyond

According to the NHS, vitamin B12 deficiency affects one in ten people over 75, with some medications adversely affecting absorption. Researchers at the Quadram Institute in Norwich showed that older, healthy adults with low vitamin B12 levels, but still above the threshold for a deficiency, had sharper cognitive decline. If you don't eat food from animals you will need a B12 supplement. Marmite contains large quantities, and mushrooms, bananas, peanut butter, yoghurt, trout and peas supply a range of the other B vitamins. "A significant body of research has found that some B vitamins are associated with cognitive decline," McCartney says. "The brain likes to burn glucose, and B vitamins are important for that process, so if lacking in your diet it can manifest as brain problems."

Men Anaemia and low iron stores are rare among men under the age of 64, but the risk rises for those over the age of 70. Around 25 per cent of all healthy adults in their seventies and older developed iron-deficiency anaemia within five years of having enrolled in one study in Australia and the US. The risk was 20 per cent higher among those taking a low-dose daily aspirin (sometimes recommended by the NHS to make your blood less sticky). Eat more of the dark meat on chicken, as well as pumpkin and sesame seeds, quinoa and button mushrooms to get more iron. Check with your GP for a blood test if you are concerned about a deficiency.

Women We are all less active so less hungry by this age and that makes it all the more important to get nutrient-dense foods. "At any age, men tend to eat about one third more food on average each day than women," McCartney says. "For this reason it is easier for men to meet micronutrient requirements just because of that bigger volume of food, whereas women can miss out on important vitamins if they don't consume enough of a variety of healthy foods." A reduction in the body's ability to recognise thirst makes you more prone to dehydration, which, in turn, can cause mental confusion. Older women are statistically more prone to dehydration than men, so make sure you drink plenty of fluids — tea and coffee count — and foods with a high water content such as bone or vegetable broths, fruit smoothies, watermelon, cucumber and oranges.

arts

Galileo! Galileo! How Freddie

The Queen frontman's former fiancée, Mary Austin, reveals what happened when he created his great rock opera and rewrote the rules of the pop single

Queen in the 1975 Bohemian Rhapsody music video. Below: Freddie Mercury and Mary Austin

A six-minute song with no chorus, divided into distinct movements and drawing freely on ballad, rock and operatic forms, *Bohemian Rhapsody* bore little resemblance to the conventional hits governing early 1970s charts. It would take the kind of ambitious, symphonic thinking of bands such as King Crimson and Genesis and propel it, improbably, to the top of the singles charts. It became, for a time, the most expensive song ever recorded, was instrumental in popularising the music video, and would go on to permanently alter expectations of what a rock single could achieve. It is Queen's — and Freddie's — achievement.

The song is thought to have begun life in 1968. Having written the line "Mama, just killed a man" while still a student at Ealing Art College, Freddie held onto it for years, uncertain where it belonged. The lyric suggested a cinematic, Old West atmosphere, and he informally referred to the unfinished piece as "the Cowboy Song". The manuscripts I later found in his archive demonstrate how that one line evolved from a loose idea into something that demanded an entirely new framework. From the outset the ambition was unusual.

Much of the song existed on Freddie's piano before it existed anywhere else. House visitors remember hearing sections played long before the band entered the studio, and the producer Roy Thomas Baker was introduced to an early version during a visit to our flat in Kensington, where Freddie demonstrated the ballad opening, hinted at the structural shifts to come and announced, with evident relish, the arrival of an operatic section.

Sleepless nights, tapes and Joni Mitchell

Freddie's writing environment was normally relaxed. I'd come in, he'd stop, we'd drink tea and talk, then get on with our evening. With *Bohemian Rhapsody* that didn't happen. In came a new seriousness — even greater focus. Now he didn't even stir when I came in; he was lost in silent thought.

There was a moment around this time when he became frustrated because he'd dreamt something — lyrics, or part of them — and woken up unable to remember what they were. He was so concerned about losing ideas that we kept a notebook and pen by the bed, and Freddie got into the habit of deliberately waking himself in the middle of the night to write things down.

He'd also begun using a tape recorder. Before that, ideas were just sung or hummed and risked being forgotten. With *Bohemian Rhapsody*, there was simply too much material moving at once, so the tape recorder allowed him to catch fragments as they came — chord sequences, vocal lines, harmony ideas. After that, the tape machine never left him. He used it constantly, right up until his death. He could operate it without looking, press the buttons blindfolded. He'd take the tapes into the studio and say, "These are my thoughts," and everything would begin from there.

Around this time Freddie was playing Joni Mitchell constantly — her album *Court and Spark*, or possibly *For the Roses*. I remember feeling almost jealous, which sounds ridiculous now but true nonetheless. Joni Mitchell was the only woman I was ever jealous of.

One day he mentioned to me that I might like Chopin's Preludes. Sure enough, I bought a record and loved it. We listened to Mozart as well. Whether that came directly into *Bohemian Rhapsody*, I don't know — but it was in the air.

> "He was playing Joni Mitchell constantly. She was the only woman I was ever jealous of

A proper piano

By the mid-1970s it was obvious that Freddie's old upright piano at our flat in Holland Road was no longer enough. It had served him well — songs like *Killer Queen* had been written on it — but what he was writing now was more demanding. In studios and on tour he was surrounded by beautiful instruments, and I could see that he wanted something at home that came closer to the sound and feel of the Steinways and Bösendorfers he was used to.

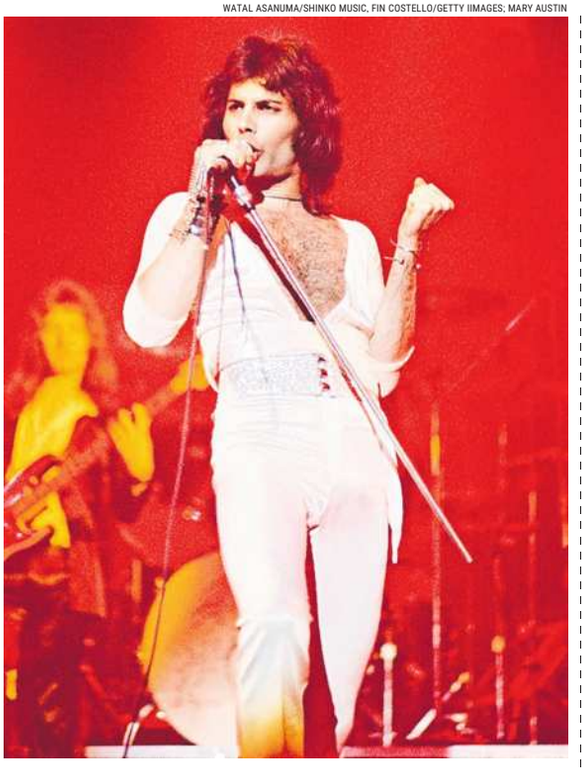
The search took weeks. In the end he found a Yamaha G2 grand piano that cost about £1,000. It was delivered to our cramped flat in 1975 while I was at work. When I walked in that evening it felt as though the space had been swallowed whole. The piano took up a good third of the sitting room. It was black, high-gloss and unapologetic. But something unlocked when he took delivery of that piano. He could sit there all day.

His surviving manuscripts chart the song's evolution in fine detail. Written on British Midland Airways stationery dated 1974 (Freddie's father worked for the airline), they show him working through titles, structures and lyrics with meticulous care. Lines are tested and abandoned, including an unused opening — "Time for goodbyes now, is this reality" — and an entire discarded ballad verse beginning "Mama, there's a war began, / I've got to leave tonight". Other phrases appear early only to find their place much later; "Nothing really matters to me" is written down long before it settles into its final position. Entire pages are given over to harmony lines, particularly for the operatic middle section and the outro. Words such as "Galileo", "Bismillah", "Fandango" and "thunderbolt and lightning" appear almost as visual markers, anchoring musical ideas rather than narrative ones. Freddie's ambition was not to replicate opera, rather to appropriate its drama and scale for a rock context.

Bring the family

Recording began on August 24, 1975, at Rockfield Studio 1, near Monmouth in

made Bohemian Rhapsody



WATAL ASANUMA/SHINKO MUSIC, FIN COSTELLO/GETTY IIMAGES; MARY AUSTIN

Freddie Mercury performing on stage. Left: backstage on the A Night at the Opera tour in 1975

South Wales, following rehearsals first at Ridge Farm in Surrey, and then Penrhos Court in Herefordshire. Usually, I stayed out of the studio when they were recording, so going up to Rockfield felt out of the ordinary straight away. I had taken time away from my job at Biba, the Kensington fashion boutique, to be there. Rockfield was a farm, really — a yard surrounded by converted stables — and overall I really liked it: there was a good atmosphere, good food, the other partners were there as well, and it all felt warm and quite convivial, even familial.

During the days I strolled into the village, which was a long walk through the countryside. I'd buy food, do a bit of shopping, just meander, sometimes alone, sometimes with Chrissie Mullen, Brian May's partner, and Veronica Tetzlaff, who married John Deacon, Queen's bassist. At nights we'd all eat together at a large table, after which the band would usually go back into the studio.

As far as I know, they hadn't intended to only record one song; they went to make an album. But although they might have had the odd half-day on other material, mostly they were either rehearsing or recording *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

So many vocals the tape wore thin

The song would be divided into three distinct parts: the opening ballad, the operatic middle section and the closing rock passage. The first section was recorded with piano, bass and drums in a relatively familiar way. At that stage the operatic section was left deliberately incomplete, with blank tape set aside on the reel for material that would be added later. The final rock section was treated almost as a separate recording, captured as a loud, heavy track in the style of the period. Even here, the arrangement was unusual. The basic backing track was recorded without a lead vocal, allowing space on the tape for the extensive backing vocals that would be layered on later. This approach went against standard practice but was necessary given the limitations of the available equipment.

The recording of the operatic section proved especially time-consuming as what had originally been conceived as a short passage grew exponentially. In all, more than 180 vocal overdubs were recorded, with Roger Taylor providing the highest parts, Brian the lower ones, and Freddie singing across the middle and lower registers. John chose not to participate, feeling that his vocals were not up to scratch. With only 24 tracks available in the studio, the production team were forced to bounce vocals down into successive sub-mixes, reusing tracks again and again. By the end of the process, some sections existed on tape that had been recorded on eight times. Tape was spliced repeatedly as new ideas were added, with sections cut and reassembled into the correct order. The tape became so worn from repeated use that light could pass through.

We're gonna need a bigger studio

Following the Rockfield sessions, Queen moved between different London studios, including Roundhouse, Scorpio Sound, Wessex Sound Studios and Sarm Studios. At Sarm in Notting Hill, the band had access to a state-of-the-art 24-track facility. The engineers Mike Stone and Gary Langan worked alongside Roy Thomas Baker, with Freddie putting the finishing touches to the track. Brian added guitar elements, including a carefully composed solo. The final mixes introduced another layer of complexity. The cumulative effect of repeated overdubbing contributes to the way the sound thickens and strains as the song progresses. The ballad

> **The tape became so worn that light could pass through it**

opening remains clean and clear, but as the operatic section builds, the vocals become increasingly saturated — not as an added effect, but as a natural result of pushing the recording process to its limits. With the song finished — the entire recording having taken three weeks, a length of time that many groups would have spent on an entire album — the band wanted it released as a single. However, its length — at nearly six minutes — ran against the conventions of radio and record marketing of the time.

Kenny Everett to the rescue

To discuss the release, the band held a meeting at EMI from which Freddie returned looking worried. The record company wanted the song cut down, but he'd told them that was how it had to be — and then walked out. If he'd sounded firm to them, he certainly wasn't so sure in the privacy of his own home. Back at the flat, he was worried he had torpedoed his own career and that of the band. I'd never seen him that concerned before.

When the record company dug its heels in, Freddie found an ally in Kenny Everett, who was then a top DJ at Capital Radio. Kenny understood the song instinctively and didn't want to see it edited. Given a copy of the record, I think there was an understanding that he might play it once, maybe twice. But telling Kenny to do something within limits was always a lost cause. He took that as a challenge. His show was at the weekend and once he started he played it over and over. He began by teasing it and then aired the whole thing, time and time again, and by the end of that weekend it felt as though it was everywhere.

That was also when I heard it properly for the first time. I remember thinking how strange it must sound to people hearing it cold. It was so unlike anything else — you didn't quite know what you were listening to at first. But it carried you with it. There was such joy in it, such confidence, that it didn't matter if you couldn't immediately make sense of every part. And clearly Kenny felt that too, because listeners responded straight away.

Capital Radio was flooded with requests for a single that didn't even exist yet. Freddie was jubilant. I think he felt that someone had finally stood alongside him rather than trying to cut his work down to size. That whole struggle — from the song's beginnings at the piano through Wales, through months of work, doubt and turmoil — suddenly tipped the other way.

The single that conquered the world

Airplay in both the UK and the US forced the record company's hands. When the unedited single was finally released, backed by the Roger Taylor composition *I'm in Love with My Car,* it rapidly climbed the charts. To promote the single, Queen had chosen to make a video rather than appear on television in person. The decision avoided the difficulties of miming such a complex track and allowed the band to control how the song was presented visually. Shot at Elstree Studios on November 10, 1975, and directed by Bruce Gowers, the video — very unlike the song — was completed in just four hours at a cost of £4,500. All visual effects were created during filming. The opening image — the four band members in darkness, heads tilted back — echoed the photographer Mick Rock's cover of *Queen II*. The video was edited and delivered to the BBC within hours and broadcast on *Top of the Pops* the same month. Its success helped establish promotional films as a central part of single releases, allowing artists to present their music visually without appearing live.

By Christmas 1975 *Bohemian Rhapsody* was at No 1, where it would remain for nine weeks. It reached the top of the charts across much of Europe, Australia and Canada. Although it was initially less dominant in the United States, the song's long chart run and later rereleases cemented its status there over time. Its various returns to the charts in subsequent years only reinforced what had become clear: this was not just a hit in one territory or one moment but a global success, and one that would endure. In time it came to stand as one of the most successful and recognisable recordings of the 20th century.

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health

There are hidden benefits to the shingles vaccine but timing is key

Dr Mark Porter

Last year I anticipated increased demand for the shingles vaccine after it was linked to a lower risk of developing dementia. If shingles itself wasn't enough of a driver, then perhaps additional protection for your brain might be.

I was wrong: uptake has remained poor, with just a third of eligible adults in their mid-sixties in England receiving both doses of the latest version. Could new research suggesting that it may also protect against cardiovascular disease such as strokes and heart attacks have more of an impact?

There is now plenty of evidence that people vaccinated against shingles are less likely than their unvaccinated peers to develop dementia and cardiovascular disease, but the evidence is not perfect. There is concern that, when comparing vaccinated and unvaccinated people, there may be other reasons for differing outcomes. Not least that those with early dementia, or frailty due to existing cardiovascular problems, may be less likely to take up the offer of vaccination, skewing the results.

However, the latest research is a step forward. A team from the University of Oxford used the switchover in America from the older shingles vaccine to a newer type to compare cardiovascular outcomes over seven years. So, in theory, the only difference between the 70,000 people involved was the type of vaccine they had, as the older one was phased out. Bottom line? Those who had the newer version (Shingrix) were better protected against cardiovascular disease than those who had the older Zostavax.

The new study stops short of confirming causation — that either vaccine is definitely responsible for the protective effect — but addresses previous concerns that older research may have been comparing apples and oranges. We would need a proper randomised controlled trial to prove causation, and there are calls for one, but no firm plans as yet. So where does all this leave us?

First, Shingrix looks better than the older Zostavax, for both shingles prevention and other effects. And shingles is not the only vaccine with surprising additional benefits. American researchers have shown that people who have had at least one flu jab are 40 per cent less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease over a four-year period than their unvaccinated peers. A similar effect has been seen with the combined tetanus, whooping cough and diphtheria vaccine, and with the pneumonia jab (a 30 and 27 per cent reduction respectively over eight years).

Second, while these percentage reductions sound impressive, most people in their sixties — the age at which they become eligible in the UK (see panel) — are at comparatively low risk of both dementia and cardiovascular disease.

The Oxford study found that those given Shingrix went on to spend 10 per cent less of the study period (seven years) living with coronary artery disease than those given the older vaccine. However, 10 per cent of not very much is, well, not very much. Or, to put it another way, you would have to vaccinate a lot of people to save one of them, probably far more than you would when initiating statins to try to prevent heart disease.

Third, assuming we accept that it is the vaccines that are doing the protecting, and not some other factor the researchers have been unable to account for, it is still uncertain how they are doing it. Theories include protection against the diseases themselves — shingles infection can trigger heart attacks and strokes by increasing inflammation — or the actions of something else in the

> **Know your blood pressure and cholesterol numbers**

vaccine, such as adjuvants used to boost response (Shingrix contains one, Zostavax does not).

Finally, whatever the mechanism, some vaccines seem to offer useful benefits over and above those that they were designed for. So I plan to have every one that I am eligible for, which, at my age (63), will soon include shingles, flu and the pneumonia jab. And if one, or all, of these helps to reduce two of the biggest threats to my wellbeing — cardiovascular disease and dementia — then so much the better.

However, I wouldn't pay privately for something I wasn't eligible for to get it earlier. The benefits are too small. Plus, having the shingles vaccine too early may leave me exposed when I most need it. Protection from Shingrix wanes after a decade or so, and no booster is yet on offer.

And if you are concerned about dementia, stroke and heart disease — and you should be — then start with the basics. Look to diet and lifestyle interventions first because these tend to be more effective than medication. Know your numbers, such as blood pressure and cholesterol profile, and if offered a statin do give it serious consideration.

You can access the full findings of the Oxford vaccine study by searching for "shingles research" at nature.com.

Who is eligible for the vaccine?

The following groups are eligible for a free two-dose course of the newer shingles vaccine Shingrix:

- **People turning 65 on or after September 1, 2023 (anyone who was already 65-69 then is not eligible until they turn 70). The entry age is expected to reduce to 60 in September 2028**
- **Anyone aged 70-79**
- **Those aged 18 and over with a severely weakened immune system. Shingrix is available privately to people aged 50 or over from about £450 a course.**

Side-effects are mostly limited to a sore arm and feeling under the weather, but are enough to put some off returning for a second dose. And in rare cases — about three per one million doses — it is associated with Guillain-Barré syndrome, which can lead to serious muscle weakness and paralysis. Most people make a full recovery.

The same study that identified the Guillain-Barré link also estimated that the vaccine prevents more than 7,000 cases of shingles for every one million doses given.

Why going for a run may be the best bet for insomniacs

Feeling tired? Exercise is as effective as a nap, a study has found. That's handy, says Dr Jonathan Sunkersing, because sleep gadgets don't help. By Antonia Hoyle

From magnesium supplements to smart mattresses and wearable tech, the global sleep industry is worth an estimated £41 billion, according to the market research company Grand View Research. But is any of it helping? The Sleep Charity estimates that one in three of us suffers from insomnia, while a 2022 study for the Nuffield Health Healthier Nation Index found 74 per cent of adults reported a decline in their sleep quality over the preceding 12 months.

Now research has found something simple — and free — may help. Last week it was discovered that 20 minutes of exercise was as effective as a 90-minute nap for keeping the brain sharp after a sleepless night.

Scientists from McGill University in Quebec, Canada, kept 54 adults awake for 30 hours, dividing them into three groups: a 20-minute cycling session, a 90-minute nap and a control group. Both those who exercised and those who napped scored an average of 22 per cent higher than the control group on memory tests, while those who worked out also said they felt no more tired than those who didn't. Researchers concluded physical activity was a "promising tool" for insomniacs who weren't able to nap after a bad night's sleep.

Dr Jonathan Sunkersing, a leading sleep expert, encourages patients to exercise even if they haven't had much sleep, "because part of the treatment for sleep problems is thinking about how they spend their 24 hours rather than just night-time. We know exercise improves sleep quality and reduces anxiety and stress, and people with anxiety and stress often have some sleep disturbance as well."

Last week's study, published in the journal PNAS, found exercise and napping protected memory differently. While participants' brain activity showed napping seemed to help the brain recharge, exercise allowed it to use its resources more efficiently.

The exact mechanism by which exercise helps insomniacs is unclear, Sunkersing says, but there is an undeniable link. "Insomnia is a pro-inflammatory condition. While intense exercise temporarily increases inflammation, long-term it reduces it. Exercise often gets people outside and daylight also helps synchronise the circadian rhythm, which signals to the brain to sleep."

A GP who lives in Cambridge with his wife and their 18-month-old daughter, Sunkersing, 38, is a former sleep doctor at the NHS Sleep Centre at the Royal Papworth Hospital and works for the private sleep clinic, the Better Sleep Clinic, alongside other NHS doctors, and is a trustee for the Sleep Charity. He believes it's high time we stop conflating insomnia with the lucrative wellness market's sleep obsession: "Someone with insomnia has a disease that needs evidence-based treatment."

He attributes the rise in sleep problems to our 24/7 digital culture and sees increasing numbers of "desperate" insomniacs who've wasted money on gadgets and "sleep hygiene" products such as fancy pillows and lavender pillow sprays. "Imagine you've spent hundreds, maybe thousands, on all this stuff to try and get better. A lot of patients I see think, 'I'm at my wit's end'," he says. "They say, 'I've got all this data. What do I do with it?'" Sometimes he tells them: "Ignore it."

Sunkersing concedes smartwatch data, which uses body movements and heart rate to reveal total sleep time, sleep consistency (what time you fall asleep and wake), and stages of sleep such as rapid eye movement (REM), the critical period associated

LORD HENRI VOTON/GETTY IMAGES

with memory consolidation, is "getting better" but stresses it's "not one size fits all".

Companies often won't reveal how they measure their data, he explains, claiming "a proprietary algorithm". In which case, he asks, "Do I trust you? How accurate is it?" According to Oxford Neuroscience research, sleep trackers are accurate only 78 per cent of the time when identifying sleep versus wakefulness, and 38 per cent of the time when telling people how long it took them to fall asleep.

A poor score can lead to anxiety, Sunkersing says, in both insomniacs and wellness enthusiasts, who want to optimise their sleep to improve health but end up with orthosomnia — a term coined by researchers in the journal Sleep Medicine to describe people who become so worried about their scores on wearable tech that their sleep gets worse.

He's even more critical of high-tech mattresses that monitor movement and change temperature, claiming to improve your sleep. "It's not an evidence-based treatment. Just open a window. Much cheaper."

Sleep matters, he stresses, because lack of it is linked to so many other problems. "The worse your sleep, the worse the risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer. People with insomnia have higher markers of inflammation. The hunger and satiation mechanism is disrupted."

Then, he adds, there's the increased risk of depression and accidents (according to the road safety charity Brake, 10-20 per cent of traffic accidents are believed to be fatigue-related) and productivity loss — insomnia is reported to cost the UK economy £34 billion a year. So, he asks: "Why are we not taking this seriously?"

Sunkersing's interest in sleep began as a trainee medic working overnight in accident and emergency, when he developed shift work disorder, a condition where work schedules conflict with the circadian rhythm, causing fatigue, low mood and depression. "I'd put the keys in the wrong door on my way home. I walked in front of traffic outside the hospital. I felt muted."

> **"The worse your sleep, the worse the risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer**

After qualifying as a GP he studied for a master's in sleep medicine at Oxford University. Now he sleeps "relatively well" but is sensitive to the insomniac's plight. "It's lonely at 4am. You've got one hand tied behind your back, all day, every day."

GPs are given just two to three hours' training on sleep, he points out, and often lack the confidence to treat insomnia that they would have for something like high blood pressure. "There isn't a Royal College of Sleep Medicine, or a protocolised way of seeing patients efficiently within the NHS."

Although physiological causes can sometimes be pinpointed — iron deficiency anaemia, for instance, can trigger restless leg syndrome — there is no single test for insomnia, which the World Health Organisation defines as three nights or more of difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep in a week, for three months, with accompanying symptoms such as low concentration and mood.

Instead, Sunkersing starts by asking his patients questions: "Do you fall asleep quickly? If you wake up, what happens? Do you nap in the daytime? Are you snoring?" (Snoring can be a sign of sleep apnoea, in which breathing is interrupted during sleep, causing constant waking, and is a condition 80 per cent of sufferers are unaware they have.)

The "optimum" amount of sleep for most of us is seven or eight hours, he says, and one bad night need not be a disaster. "I have a little child who will wake me up. That's not a disease. That's just being a dad."

Insomnia is caused by a complex combination of genetic and environmental factors and "acute", or short-term, insomnia is often triggered by a stressful situation such as a new job. For this, GPs may prescribe zopiclone, a sedative that reduces brain activity and quickly induces sleep. While it can be addictive and cause drowsiness the next day, "the risks are low enough to give benefit in the short term".

If insomnia continues, it becomes "chronic" and is often exacerbated by attempts to ease it, such as sleeping in later rather than getting up at the same time after a difficult night, or drinking alcohol to try to knock yourself out.

The first-line NHS treatment for chronic insomnia is typically eight sessions of cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia to reframe your beliefs around sleep. "It's very safe," Sunkersing says. "It works for at least 70-80 per cent of patients."

But many struggle to access it on the NHS, and "it doesn't work straight away", he adds as a caveat, with both patient and GP having to be open-minded and believe it can work.

Since 2023, daridorexant, a new generation of sleeping pill that blocks receptors in the brain that promote wakefulness, has been recommended for insomnia by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. But provision on the NHS is patchier still, perhaps because, at £42 for 32 tablets, it costs significantly more than zopiclone, at 82p per 14 tablets. Side-effects include headaches and sleep paralysis — when you're awake or half-awake but temporarily unable to move or speak — but it's nonaddictive and has had "a remarkable impact" on some of Sunkersing's patients: "I would say it works."

Our core body temperature needs to drop by 1C before we can sleep and keeping a cool bedroom is also a good idea, "between 18 and 16 degrees", he says. He suggests either blackout blinds or an eye mask for maximum darkness.

"Even if you close your eyes and there's light coming in [to the room] it's still perceived by the brain," he says, adding insomniacs should "limit caffeinated drinks after four o'clock at the very latest". A small glass of wine two or three hours before bed is "fine" he thinks, but significantly more, later, and "you're going to have really broken sleep".

Insomniacs often decide that because they are awake anyway they might as well make productive use of their time, working on their phones in bed. But this teaches your body to wake overnight, he says — and crucial in treating insomnia is breaking the association between bed and wakefulness.

So don't use your phone as an alarm if you know you can't resist the temptation to pick it up when you can't sleep. "We are connected to the whole world, so it's very hard to ignore the notifications," he says, and asks: "Are you going to work when you wake up?"

Similarly, trying to sleep on the sofa or in the spare room can be unhelpful "because you're diluting where your brain thinks sleep should happen".

If you can't sleep, get out of bed and "do something relaxing in a dim light", he says. Eventually, no matter how wired you were you'll feel "sleep pressure", tiredness that builds the longer we're awake, and when you feel relaxed, return to bed. "The key is not worrying," he says — conceding this is easier said than done.

And don't be afraid to seek medical help before splashing out on so-called miracle products: "You wouldn't go to your wellness person and say, 'I've got heart failure. I want to use my Apple watch.'"

As to the usefulness of exercise as a sleep aid, he makes two final points. "To create a lasting habit, do exercise you enjoy, and bear in mind the time you exercise. Exercising earlier in the day means you're more likely to reduce the time you need to get to sleep.

"Exercise close to bedtime, it's likely you'll ask your body to fall asleep later, as it elevates core body temperature and spikes wake hormones like cortisol and adrenaline, keeping the nervous system in an active state."

times2

Your weekday brain boost

More puzzles Pages 14-16

Every day, Monday to Thursday, a page of extra puzzles to give your brain an extended workout

Samurai medium

Fill each grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Where the puzzles overlap, the rows and columns do not go beyond their usual length.

9	1				3	6		
8		3	9		2 6			
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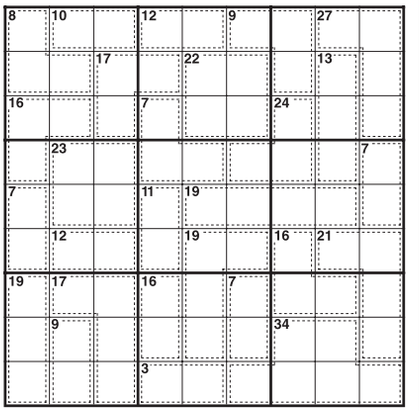
Sudoku fiendish

			3
	9 2	2 9 7	7 5
	8 1	4 2 5	3 6
	3	1	
	2 7 6	6 2	7 8 9 5

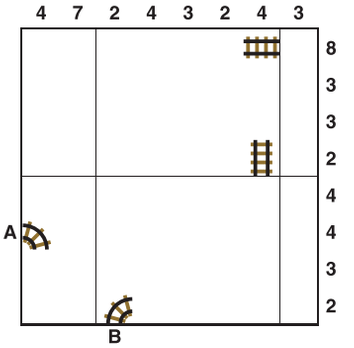
Killer tricky

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.



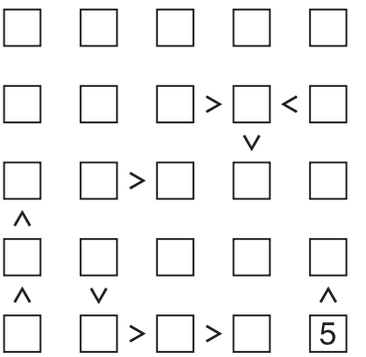
Train Tracks

Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

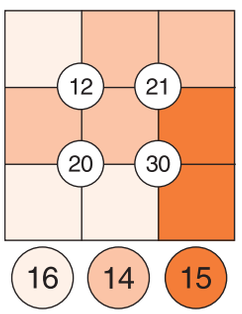


Futoshiki

Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.



Sakuro



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

Play Mini Sudoku every day Monday-Sunday online at thetimes.com and on Live app

Codeword

Every letter in the crossword-style grid, right, is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded.

12	4	23	18	■	17 C	12	4	13	13	21	4	2
18	■	1	■	8	■	11	■	11	■	15	■	1
25	10	13	24	1	3	20	■	4	2	26	18	22
1	■	24	■	24	■	24	■	2	■	14	■	18
19	12	15	6	11	■	11 H	4	26	4	10	12	■
19	■	■	■	18	■	7	■	■	■	18	■	18
18	3	3	4	12	24	■	13	20	26	24	15	5
22	■	16	■	■	■	21	■	18	■	■	■	18
■	26	15	10	13	18	15	■	15	24	24	1	17
13	■	23	■	1 I	■	12	■	12	■	2	■	10
17	11	4	1	12	■	21	4	16	22	18	13	24
10	■	10	■	18	■	18	■	20	■	15	■	18
7	15	12	1	26	15	22	18	■	13	9	1	22

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1 I	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11 H	12	13
14	15	16	17 C	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Mini Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x2 box contains the digits 1 to 6

Solutions in tomorrow's Times2

4			6		
	2	6	5		
				5	6
5	6				
		5	2	3	
		3			5

Yesterday's solutions

SAMURAI

5	7	6	2	8	9	1	3	4		3	5	7	8	4	6	1	2	9
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MINI SUDOKU

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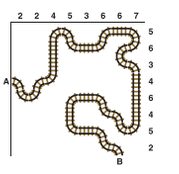

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KILLER

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CODEWORD

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C	A	S	T	A	W	A	Y	■	C	R	O	W
K	■	I	■	L	■	H	■	T	■	S	■	O
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Down memory lane with two national treasures

Carol Midgley
TV review

Tea with Judi Dench
Sky Arts/Now
★★★★☆

How to describe the look on Judi Dench's face when she offered Ian McKellen a glass of champagne and he replied, "I don't drink."

Deflated? Crestfallen? I don't blame her. She had probably mentally booked herself in for a slightly squiffy afternoon as they did a thespians' stagger down memory lane but now realised it would only be tea and cake. Or, rather, parkin.

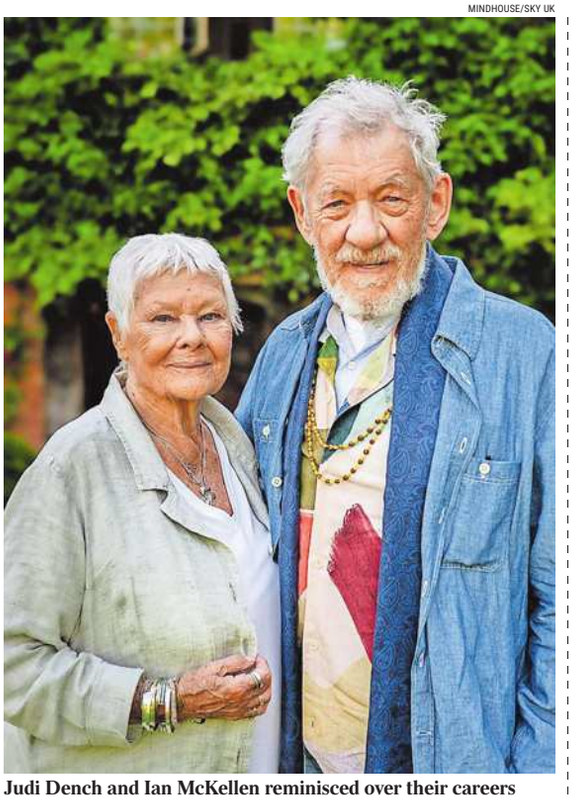
Ah, well. It didn't stop *Tea with Judi Dench* being a nourishing, mostly jolly 45 minutes as they looked back over their long careers, including that seminal Trevor Nunn production of *Macbeth* in the 1970s when he played Macbeth and she Lady Macbeth and the whole set cost £250. McKellen said he was wearing a costume from a second-hand shop whose buttons bore the words Birmingham Fire Brigade. She wore a black dishcloth on her head. Simpler times.

Remember that scene from *Spitting Image* (in the days when it was funny) that had Laurence Olivier and John Gielgud having luvvie tea and cakes and saying, "Dear, dear Larry"; "Dear, dear Johnny; "Dear, dear tea"? I imagined this episode might be a bit like that as they reminisced about the old days. At times it sort of was. But it was mostly two national treasures, he 87, she 91, being life-affirming.

When McKellen read from one of his favourite books, *Tales of the City* by Armistead Maupin, it was moving. In it a man is writing a letter to his parents to tell them that he is gay: "If you and Papa are responsible for the way I am, then I thank you." McKellen, who was a founding member of Stonewall, broke down reading that bit.

We saw her Oscar statuette, and he talked about breaking his Golden Globe, but it was better when they were being self-deprecating. Both starred in the hugely panned film version of *Cats*, which Dench said with fine understatement "didn't quite land with cinema audiences".

MINDHOUSE/SKY UK



Judi Dench and Ian McKellen reminisced over their careers

"I was frightful in the film," she said. In the voiceover she added that "maybe the best way to survive success or failure is to take neither too seriously". Wise words.

This provided a lovely segue into a brilliantly funny clip from Ricky Gervais's *Extras* when McKellen generously sent himself up as a pretentious thespian revealing the secrets of acting. "It was great fun but I do think people think I'm rather like that, which is a pity," he said.

It turns out that Dench's African grey parrot, Sweetie, has a great sense of comic timing. The bird was mostly quiet until McKellen had finished telling a story about how an actor friend used to try to woo female audience members. It chose this moment to do a huge wolf whistle, though I was hoping for another type of outburst from Sweetie. Dench has previously revealed that the parrot sometimes calls her "a slut". Sadly we didn't get to hear that.

Anyway, it was a gentle, upbeat, occasionally sobering conversation. McKellen asked how often she considers death. The answer seems to be never... she shoos any such thoughts "out of the door". "I think about it every single day," he replied. "I don't," she said. "Well, I think you've got it right," he said before she changed the subject. Pity. I could have listened to a lot more of that.

Radio choice

In the Studio
BBC World Service, 1.15pm

Lewis Borg-Cardona meets the super-producer Steve Levine, *above*, as he prepares to remix the Beach Boys' self-titled 1985 album for re-release. He was the record's original producer and the programme follows him in his Liverpool studio as he works on the master recordings of the band's first studio project to be recorded digitally. He makes the tracks shine anew with technology. Levine also discusses working with the guest musicians Stevie Wonder and Ringo Starr and, perhaps more surprsingly, with Culture Club's Boy George and Roy Hay, who wrote the album's track *Passing Friend* for the band. *Clair Woodward*

Times Radio
Digital, web, smart speaker, app
5.00am Cara Bentley with Early Breakfast **6.00** Kate McCann and Stig Abell with Breakfast **10.00** Hugo Rifkind **1.00pm** Jo Coburn **2.00** Jane Garvey and Fi Glover **4.00** John Pienaar **7.00** Kait Borsay **10.00** Carole Walker **1.00am** The Best of Times Radio

Radio 2
FM: 88-90.2 MHz
6.30am Sara Cox **9.30** Vernon Kay **12.00** Tina Daheley **2.00pm** DJ Spoony **4.00** Drivetime **7.00** Jo Whiley **9.00** The Jazz Show with Jamie Cullum **10.00** Melvin Odoom **12.00** OJ Borg **2.30am** One Hit Wonders **3.00** Sounds of the 90s (r) **4.00** Owain Wyn Evans

Radio 3
FM: 90.2-92.4 MHz
6.30am Breakfast
9.30 Essential Classics
1.00pm Classical Live
Linton Stephens introduces highlights from the Proms, including music by Strauss and chamber performances from the 2026 Montpellier Festival and Rocamadour Festival in France. BBC Proms: R Strauss (arr. attrib. A. Rodziński) (*Der Rosenkavalier* – suite); Montpellier Festival: Mendelssohn (Excerpts from *Songs without Words*. Andante con moto, Op 19/1. Andante espressivo, Op 19/2. Agitato, Op 38/5); International Baroque Festival, Beaune: Locatelli (Sinfonia funebre in F minor); BBC Proms: R Strauss (*Ein Heldenleben*); Rocamadour Festival: Arvo Pärt (*De profundis*); and BBC Proms: R Strauss (*Salome* – final scene)
4.00 Composer of the Week: Élisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre (1665-1729)
Kate Molleson follows young Élisabeth Jacquet as she joins the court in Versailles (r)
5.00 In Tune
7.00 Classical Mixtape
7.30 Live BBC Proms 2026
The BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Jakub Hruöa, with Lukáö Vondrácek. Presented by Martin Handley, live from London's Royal Albert Hall. Kaprálová (Suita rustica); Rachmaninov (Piano Concerto No 3 in D minor); and Janáček (Sinfonietta)
10.00 Night Tracks (r)
11.30 'Round Midnight
The Bad Plus share the opening track from their 16th album
12.30am Through the Night (r)

Radio 4
FM: 92.4-94.6 MHz
5.00am News Summary
5.04 Dictators' Survival Guide (r)
5.34 Shipping Forecast
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
6.00 Today
9.00 Invisible Hands
The story of Pat Buchanan (6/6)
9.30 Michael Sheen
Gets into Character
Michael finds out what it is like to be a young actor today (3/3) (r)
10.00 Woman's Hour
11.00 Add to Playlist
Gavin Higgins and RuthAnne create a playlist (3/6) (r)
11.45 You Do Not
Have to Say Anything (2/10) (r)
12.04pm Call You and Yours
1.00 The World at One
1.45 A 9/11 Story
A woman whose husband was on the 104th floor of the North Tower of the World Trade Center (2/10)
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Drama: Downstream
Third and final instalment of the comedy drama, by Nick Warburton
3.00 History's Secret Heroes
Helena Bonham Carter tells the story of Operation Frankton (2/10)
3.30 Heart and Soul
Rajeev Gupta speaks to ex-US soldier David Eubank (8/10)
4.00 Beryl Cook:
Artist or Entertainer?
The life and career of the painter
4.30 What's Up Docs?
A look at sticking to a routine
5.00 PM
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 Paul Sinha's Perfect Pub Quiz
Paul challenges his audience to listen very carefully (4/6)
7.00 The Archers
Pat has a bone to pick
7.15 Front Row
The key figures that shaped American culture (r)
8.00 Medical Emergency
Examining the high suicide rate among doctors
8.40 In Touch
9.00 Crossing Continents
Ellie House reports on the US's increasingly interconnected surveillance network (5/9)
9.30 Scam Secrets
Advice on how to help someone who is being scammed (5/8) (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
10.45 Book at Bedtime:
A Working Mother
By Agnes Owens (2/5)
11.00 Half-Life
Joe Dunthorne investigates his family history (2/8) (r)
11.30 Today in Parliament
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am You Do Not Have to Say Anything (2/10) (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Radio 4 Extra
Digital only
8.00am Whatever Happened to Baby Jane Austen? **8.30** Flush **8.45** The Offing **9.00** Paul Sinha's Perfect Pub Quiz **9.30** The Secret History of a School **9.45** Daily Service **10.00** A Good Read **10.30** The School on the Moor **11.00** Five Red Herrings **11.30** Kill the Pharaoh! **12.00** Yes Minister **12.30pm** The Milligan Papers **1.00** Whatever Happened to Baby Jane Austen? **1.30** Flush **1.45** The Offing **2.00** It's Not What You Know **2.30** Life in London **3.00** To Sir with Love **4.00** A Good Read **4.30** The School on the Moor **5.00** Five Red Herrings **5.30** Kill the Pharaoh! **6.00** Yes Minister **6.30** Milligan Papers **7.00** Whatever Happened to Baby Jane Austen? **7.30** Flush **7.45** The Offing **8.00** It's Not What You Know **8.30** Life in London **9.00** To Sir with Love **10.00** Comedy Club: Paul Sinha's Perfect Pub Quiz **10.30** Pick-Ups **11.00** Tina C's Global Depression Tour **11.15** 2000 Years of Radio **11.30** Chain Reaction

Radio 5 Live
MW: 693, 909
5.00am Wake Up to Money **6.00** 5 Live Breakfast **9.00** Nicky Campbell **11.00** Naga Munchetty **2.00pm** Matt Chorley **4.00** 5 Live Drive **7.00** 5 Live Sport **8.00** 5 Live Sport. Live around-the-grounds coverage of this evening's fixtures in the Championship, League One and League Two **10.30** Gordon Smart **1.00am** Dotun Adebayo

talkSPORT
MW: 1053, 1089 kHz
5.00am Early Sports Breakfast **6.00** Breakfast with Jeff Stelling **10.00** Jim White and Simon Jordan **1.00pm** Hawksbee and Jacobs **4.00** talkSPORT Drive **7.00** Deadline Day Special with Adrian Durham **10.00** Deadline Day Special **11.30** The Sports Bar **1.00am** Extra Time with Paul Ross

Talk
Digital only
6.00am Jeremy Kyle **10.00** Julia Hartley Brewer **1.00pm** Ian Collins **4.00** Kevin O'Sullivan **7.00** Peter Cardwell **10.00** Petrie Hosken **1.00am** Paul Ross

6 Music
Digital only
5.00am Amy Lamé **7.00** Nemone **10.00** Lauren Laverne. With Johnny Marr **1.00pm** Craig Charles **4.00** Huw Stephens **7.00** New Music Fix Daily **9.00** Riley & Coe **11.00** 6 Music Artist in Residence **12.00** 6 Music's Indie Forever **1.00am** From Mento to Lovers' Rock **3.00** 6 Music Live Hour **4.00** The 6 Music Playlist

Virgin Radio
Digital only
6.30am Steve Denyer on The Chris Evans Breakfast Show **10.00** Emma B **2.00pm** Ben Jones **6.00** Geoff Lloyd **10.00** Goldierocks **2.00am** Steve Denyer

Classic FM
FM: 100-102 MHz
6.30am Breakfast with Dan Walker **9.00** The Hall of Fame Hour with Dan Walker **10.00** Aled Jones **1.00pm** Anne-Marie Minhall **4.00** Margherita Taylor **7.00** Relaxing Evenings with Zeb Soanes **10.00** Calm Classics **1.00am** Bill Overton **4.00** Early Breakfast

television

PICKS OF THE DAY

The Jury: 14 and on Trial for Murder
Channel 4, 9pm

After a fascinating first two series of the show, Channel 4 once again assembles a jury of ordinary people to consider a real case (albeit one performed by actors, using the court transcripts), to film their discussion and, crucially, find out if they reach the same conclusion as the original 12. "It's easy to overcomplicate things," says the juror Kim, 35, a hotel guest manager, "but for me it's simple. If you do bad you should be punished for what you've done." As simple as that, until two brothers, one a 14-year-old boy, are brought to the dock, charged with killing their stepfather. The boys admit to stabbing the victim while he was asleep — but was it an act of calculated revenge or pure desperation? Will this dramatic courtroom encounter conclude like the original case? **Helen Stewart**

The Jury, Channel 4, 9pm

The Game
5, 9pm

Last year's dark psychological thriller starring Jason Watkins and Robson Green got reviews that were mixed at best, but when a channel is faced with two of the most talented actors working in British TV, both prepared to sign on for another round of implausible cat-and-mouse silliness, what else is there to do but get filming? Even if, rather inconveniently, the first series ended with your Ripton Stalker (Green, a slippery vision in loose curls and a poloneck) on his way to prison, while the determined but barely competent retired cop Huw Miller (Watkins) bled out on the pavement. Happily season two finds Miller and family living in a new house by the sea, while the other, now safely ensconced in the big house, is back making friends and influencing people, still utterly and bafflingly determined to make their lives a misery. **HS**

BBC1

6.00am Breakfast
9.30 Morning Live
10.45 Rip Off Britain: Scams
11.30 Homes Under the Hammer (r) (AD)
12.15pm Bargain Hunt (r) (AD)
1.00 BBC News at One; Weather
1.35 BBC Regional News; Weather
1.45 BBC News at One; Weather
2.00 Money for Nothing. Jacqui Joseph upcycles a collection of seashells
2.45 Escape to the Country. Briony May Williams helps find a home in Cumbria within a £300,000 budget (r)
3.45 Garden Rescue. Flo Headlam and Lee Burkhill compete to design a Majorca-inspired garden in Yate, Gloucestershire (r)
4.30 The Answer Run. Jason Manford hosts the quiz show where three couples face a series of 50/50 questions (r)
5.15 Pointless. Quiz show hosted by Alexander Armstrong and Susan Wokoma
6.00 BBC News at Six; Weather
6.30 BBC Regional News; Weather

7.00 The One Show Presented by Alex Jones and Lauren Laverne

7.30 EastEnders The Hawkins make their presence known in Albert Square. Meanwhile, Ravi pushes Priya for information (AD)

8.00 The Great British Sewing Bee Sophie Willan presents as the sewers celebrate literary icons, making Sherlock Holmes' deerstalker, transforming school uniforms for a grown-up Matilda and channeling their inner Jane Austen (8/10) (AD)

9.00 Celebrity MasterChef *Coronation Street* actress Sue Cleaver, Radio 1 DJ Melvin Odoom, former Saturdays singer Una Healy, Paralympic gold medallist Lauren Steadman and the comedian Max Fosh enter the kitchen. *See picks of the day* (AD)

10.00 BBC News at Ten

10.30 BBC Regional News and Weather

10.40 FILM: Creed (12, 2015) The son of a heavyweight boxer who died in the ring seeks to follow in the footsteps of the father he never knew. He goes in search of his father's old rival-turned-best friend Rocky Balboa, who agrees to train the young fighter for a shot at the title — but the ageing champ is facing challenges of his own. Boxing drama starring Michael B Jordan, with Sylvester Stallone reprising his role from the *Rocky* movies. *See film choice*

12.50am-6.00 BBC News

BBC2

6.30am Bargain Hunt (r)
7.15 Money for Nothing (r)
8.00 Sign Zone: The Great British Sewing Bee. Music week (r) (AD, SL)
9.00 BBC News
12.15pm Politics Live
1.00 Richard Osman's House of Games. Former victors take part (r)
1.30 The Edge. Game show (r)
2.15 Weatherman Walking. Derek Brockway is on a 10-mile circular walk around Usk (r)
2.45 Animal Park. The keepers try a new strategy to get the koalas mating (r) (AD)
3.30 Serengeti III. A newborn giraffe takes its tentative first steps (r) (AD)
4.30 Vintage Antiques Roadshow. From Boston, Lincolnshire. First shown in 2003 (r)
5.10 Flog It! From Lydiard Park, Wiltshire (r)
6.00 Richard Osman's House of Games. With Ken Bruce, Alice Roberts, Perri Shakes-Drayton and Kiell Smith-Bynoe (r)
6.30 Great British Railway Journeys. From Hildenborough to Robertsbridge (r) (AD)

7.00 Nigellissima Dishes include a yoghurt pot cake and a sausage meatball supper (5/6) (r) (AD)

7.30 Race Against the Tide The remaining teams sculpt ocean-themed sand art, with the duos having six hours until the tide comes in (3/6) (AD)

8.00 Saving Lives at Sea The Newbiggin crew race to the rescue of three children who have been swept out to sea on a small inflatable dinghy. In Selsey, a mayday comes in from a vessel taking on water in the English Channel (3/10) (AD)

9.00 Emergency 24/7 A pensioner arrives with life-threatening burns after his shed explodes, and a young father with a brain clot needs an urgent specialist procedure (3/6) (AD)

10.00 Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing Paul and Bob venture to the west of Ireland to fish the mighty Lough Corrib (6/6) (r) (AD)

10.30 Newsnight Headline analysis presented by Victoria Derbyshire

11.05 FILM: The Godfather Part III (15, 1990) Ageing Mafia don Michael Corleone is haunted by past crimes as he tries to legitimise his family business. Crime drama sequel starring Al Pacino (AD)

1.30am Sign Zone: Captive Audience — A Real American Horror Story Three tourists go missing in the same area where Steven vanished. Last in the series (r) (AD, SL) **2.20-3.20** Celebrity MasterChef. Broadcaster Zoe Ball asks the celebrities to make their ultimate pudding (r) (AD, SL)

ITV1

6.00am Good Morning Britain
10.00 This Morning. Celebrity interviews, entertainment news and current affairs
1.30pm ITV News; Weather
2.00 Dickinson's Real Deal. David Dickinson and his team descend on Crewe Hall, where Fay Rutter cannot say no to a watercolour, and James Layte goes after gold (r) (AD)
3.00 Deal or No Deal. Stephen Mulhern hosts as a contestant tries to open the 22 red boxes in the right order, taking on the infamous Banker for the chance to win a life-changing cash prize (r) (AD)
4.00 Tipping Point. Ben Shephard hosts the arcade-themed quiz in which contestants drop tokens down a choice of four chutes in the hope of winning a £10,000 jackpot (r)
5.00 The Chase. Bradley Walsh asks the questions as contestants from Redditch, Kettering, Shenfield, Belfast take on one of the ruthless Chasers on the quiz show (r)
6.00 Regional News; Weather
6.30 ITV News; Weather

7.30 Millionaire Hot Seat Six new contestants face Jeremy Clarkson as they race against the clock, hoping to climb the Money Ladder

8.00 Emmerdale DS Ramsden is relishing her job, as a flashback reveals more and Nicola has a breakthrough (AD)

8.30 Coronation Street Gemma tries to remain strong for Bernie. Todd carries out Celeste's final wishes (AD)

9.00 The Sugar Daddy Murder: True Crime Presents Taking a look at the murder of Peter McMahon in 2012, whose ex-partner Sharon Swinhoe and her accomplice Joseph Collins were sentenced to life for his financially motivated killing. *See picks of the day* (AD)

10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather; followed by Regional News

10.45 FILM: Man of Steel (12, 2013) An alien living in secret on Earth uses his extraordinary powers to defend the human race from a genocidal invasion. Sci-fi adventure based on the Superman comic-books with Henry Cavill, Amy Adams, Michael Shannon and Russell Crowe (AD)

1.00am Shop on TV 3.00 The Staircase. David angles for a retrial in 2011, while in 2017 Michael faces another hearing that may finally answer questions about his first trial and Kathleen's death. Last in the series (AD) **4.10** Unwind with ITV **5.10-6.00** Prue Leith's Cotswold Kitchen (r) (SL)

Channel 4

6.30am The King of Queens (r) (AD)
7.45 Everybody Loves Raymond (r) (AD)
9.10 Frasier (r) (AD)
11.10 Ramsay's 24 Hours to Hell and Back. A dog-friendly bistro in Kansas (r) (AD)
12.05pm Channel 4 News Summary
12.10 Find It, Fix It, Flog It. Visiting a garden strewn with interesting items (r) (AD)
1.10 The Great House Giveaway. Renovating a decrepit family home in Garforth, Leeds (r)
2.10 Countdown. With Zoe Lyons
3.00 A Place in the Sun. Jasmine Harman helps a pair from Fife find their first property together on the Orihuela Costa, Spain (r)
4.00 The Great B&B Challenge. It is the second day of finals week and as one couple host a trip to a bee farm, the second pair move into the prize B&B (r)
5.00 Château DIY. A woman is running out of time to build her gazebo (r) (AD)
6.00 A New Life in the Sun: Where Are They Now? In Spain, tea shop owners try something new in their garden

7.00 Channel 4 News

8.00 The Dog House A family face double trouble as they meet cockapoo twins, and a lurcher arrives at Woodgreen in need of some serious TLC, while a three-legged Pomeranian tries to befriend a stray terrier (1/6) (r) (AD)

9.00 The Jury: 14 and on Trial for Murder New series. A dramatic restaging of a real-life murder trial, in which two brothers, one aged 14, are charged with killing their stepfather. *See picks of the day* (1/4) (AD)

10.00 9/11: 102 Minutes That Changed America Footage recorded around New York, giving an insight into their experiences of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001. The duration of the tragedy, from the first plane hitting the north tower to the collapse of both buildings, was 102 minutes. During that time, many of the city's residents sought to preserve images of what was taking place. Joined together into a single, seamless historical record, the end result is an intensely personal perspective on events as they unfolded (r) (AD)

12.30am The Never Ending Murder True crime documentary re-examining the case of Nicola Payne, who went missing in Coventry in 1991 and has never been found (r) (AD, SL) **4.05** Couples Come Dine with Me (r) (SL) **5.00** A Place in the Sun (r) **5.30** Sunday Brunch (r) **5.50-6.30** Countdown (r)

5

6.00am Milkshake!
9.10 Entertainment News on 5
9.15 Jeremy Vine. The broadcaster discusses the issues of the day
11.30 Storm & Alexis. Discussion presented by Storm Huntley and Alexis Conran
12.30pm Live Snooker: British Open 2026. Katie Shanahan presents coverage of the afternoon session on day two, held at The Centaur in Cheltenham, featuring second-round matches. Stan Moody claimed a shock 4-2 victory over 2024 world champion Kyren Wilson at this stage last year, John Higgins edged past Jack Lisowski 4-3, and Mark Williams also went to a deciding frame before prevailing against Sanderson Lam. With analysis from Stephen Hendry, Ken Doherty, and Joe Perry
5.30 5 News with Dan Walker
6.25 Car Pound Cops. In Sheffield, the community enforcement officers are cracking down on Blue Badge fraud (r)
6.55 5 News Update

7.00 Cycling: Vuelta a España 2026 Rebecca Charlton presents highlights of stage 10 of the Grand Tour race, which is a 195.5km route from Alfaro towards an uphill finish at the ski resort of Valdezcaray

7.55 5 News Update

8.00 Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders On patrol in Stoke-on-Trent, a PC hunts down a stolen black BMW on cloned plates linked to a recent burglary, while a black VW Golf catches another officer's eye

9.00 The Game New series. A year on from the attack, Huw Miller's daughter receives letters from imprisoned serial killer Patrick. Return of the thriller starring Jason Watkins. Continues tomorrow. *See picks of the day* (1/4)

10.00 9/11: The Unseen Footage The story of the September 11 terrorist attacks of 2001. From journalists and first responders to students and volunteer rescue teams, eyewitness accounts reveal how people reacted as the attacks unfolded and in the days that followed. Focusing on the first 48 hours, the film captures moments of tragedy, resilience and unity, creating a moving record of one of history's defining events (r)

11.30 The Day Diana Died Piecing together the hours following the news of the Princess of Wales' death (r)

1.05am Car Pound Cops (r) **1.30** Cruise TV (r) **2.30** GPs: Behind Closed Doors (r) **3.20** The Highland Vet (r) (SL) **4.15** Yorkshire with Jane McDonald (r) (SL) **5.00** Entertainment News on 5 **5.15** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom (r) (AD, SL) **5.35** Paw Patrol (r) (SL) **5.50-6.00** Mixmups (r) (AD, SL)

television

The Sugar Daddy Murder
ITV1, 9pm

Part of the *True Crime Presents* strand, this documentary looks at the murder of Peter McMahon, a Newcastle pensioner who in 2012 was killed by his 44-year-old former partner, Sharon Swinhoe, and her accomplice for financial gain. The story's grisly coda involves a *Line of Duty*-style freezer, which might explain the interest in the case and this re-examination 14 years later. **Victoria Segal**

Celebrity MasterChef
BBC1, 9pm

A fresh batch of celebrities is delivered to the *MasterChef* kitchen for a new round of playful challenges. Una Healy of the Saturdays, the comedian Max Fosh, the Paralympian Lauren Steadman, *Corrie*'s Sue Cleaver and the DJ Melvin Odoom take on tasks set by the chef Giorgio Locatelli and his fellow judge, Grace Dent. Among them is a blindfold taste test. **VS**

STREAMING CHOICE

The Varnell Hill Show
Paramount+

Who remembers the mid-1990s US sitcom *Martin*, which starred Martin Lawrence as a brash Detroit DJ and featured the comedian and actor Tommy Davidson in a guest-star role as the late-night talk show host Varnell Hill? Nope, neither do we. But Davidson's character has returned in a new series. No previews were available, but if the showrunner Bentley Kyle Evans can pull off what he plans — effectively an African-American remodel of *The Larry Sanders Show* — then this will be required viewing. **Andrew Male**

FILM CHOICE

Creed (12, 2015)
BBC1, 10.40pm

The Rocky franchise gets a shot in the arm from Ryan Coogler and Michael B Jordan. *Creed* tells the story of the son of Rocky's old opponent Apollo Creed. Jordan plays Adonis Johnson, while Sylvester Stallone reprises his Rocky Balboa role as the younger man's trainer. Coogler was a hot young contender when he approached Stallone with the idea that Apollo, who died in the ring in *Rocky IV*, had fathered an illegitimate son. Coogler gives the rags-to-ring story a twist by making Adonis an orphan at reform school who is rescued by Apollo's wife. (133min) **Kate Muir**

BBC4
7.00pm The Architecture the Railways Built. The former HQ of London Underground (8/10) (AD) **7.40** The Flying Gardener. Devon **8.00** To the Manor Born. DeVere neglects to invite Audrey to a ball **8.30** Keeping Up Appearances **9.00** How the Celts Saved Britain. Conclusion. Dan Snow traces the footsteps of Ireland's earliest missionaries (2/2) (AD) **10.00** Britain in Focus: A Photographic History. The explosion of colour to the digital revolution. Last in the series (AD) **11.00** I Am Martin Parr. A profile of the photographer (AD) **12.05am** The Brits Who Designed the Modern World. Documentary **1.05** The Flying Gardener **1.20** Britain in Focus: A Photographic History (AD) **2.20am-3.20** How the Celts Saved Britain (AD)

Sky Arts
9.00am Tales of the Unexpected **10.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.00** Discovering **12.00** Gil Scott-Heron — Pieces of a Man **1.00pm** Tales of the Unexpected **2.00** The Alfred Hitchcock Hour (b/w) **3.00** Stories from the National Portrait Gallery **4.00** Discovering **5.00** Best of Portrait Artist of 2023 (AD) **6.00** Tales of the Unexpected **7.00** Tea with Judi Dench Featuring Sir Ian McKellen (AD) **8.00** Chaplin: The Birth of the Tramp. Documentary (AD) **9.15** Art Traffickers: Treasures Stolen from the Tombs (AD) **10.15** Wonderland: From JM Barrie to JRR Tolkien (2/4) **11.15** The Movies **12.15am** Gloria Gaynor: I Will Survive **2.25** Inside Art: Picasso/Ingres at the National Gallery **2.50-3.45** Art Traffickers (AD)

More4
8.55am Find It, Fix It, Flog It (AD) **10.00** Four in a Bed **12.40pm** Come Dine with Me **3.20** Four in a Bed **5.55** Car SOS. Tim and Fuzz restore a classic Japanese sports coupe (AD) **6.50** Car SOS. Restoring a 1930 Ford Model A (AD) **7.55** Grand Designs. Kevin meets a south London chef who loves to entertain and is rustling up plans for a double-kitchen home (7/11) (AD) **9.00** PopMaster TV. Ken Bruce hosts as five more music fans battle it out in the fifth heat **10.00** 24 Hours in A&E. A cyclist is rushed to A&E after he "bullseyed" a car's rear window (8/11) (AD) **11.05** 24 Hours in A&E. A 61-year-old woman is airlifted to hospital after being run over by a car (AD) **12.10am** 999: On the Front Line **1.15** 24 Hours in A&E (AD) **3.25am-3.50** The Perfect Pitch

Live sport today

The Wolves forward Raúl Jiménez

Live Women's International One-Day Cricket: England v Ireland
Sky Sports Cricket, Sky Sports Mix, 12.30pm-8.30
The first ODI in the three-match series from Leicester

Live European T20 Premier League: Glasgow Cosmic v Rotterdam Dockers
TNT Sports 2, 1.45pm-5.30
Coverage from The Hague

Live US Open Tennis
Sky Sports Main Event, 3.30pm-7.30, Sky Sports +, 3.30pm-7.35, Sky Sports Tennis, 3.30pm-12midnight
Day three in New York

Live EFL: Stoke City v Norwich City
Sky Sports Main Event, 7.30pm-10.00, Sky Sports Football, 7.30pm-10.30
(Kick-off **8.00**). Championship action from Bet365 Stadium

Live EFL: West Ham United v Wolverhampton Wanderers
Sky Sports +, 7.35pm-9.45
(Kick-off **7.45**). Championship action from London Stadium

Talking Pictures
8.05am Sunshine of Your Smile **8.10 FILM: Park Plaza 605 (U, 1953)** (b/w) **9.45 FILM: The Stars Look Down (U, 1940)** (b/w) **11.35** Glimpses: Petula Clark: The Day Begins Early **11.40 FILM: Highway to Battle (U, 1961)** (b/w) **1.00pm** The Adventures of William Tell (b/w) **1.35 FILM: A Tale of Two Cities (PG, 1958)** (b/w) **3.55** Symphony for Steam **4.00** That's My Boy **4.35 FILM: The Break (PG, 1963)** **6.10** Nine, Dalmuir West **6.25** Whiplash (b/w) **6.55** The Man from UNCLE **7.55** Buccaneer **9.00 FILM: Dulcima (U, 1971)** **11.00** Fortean TV **11.35 FILM: Strip Tease Murder (18, 1961)** Crime drama (b/w) **12.55am FILM: Bluebeard (PG, 1944)** (b/w) **2.20-3.50 FILM: Two on the Tiles (PG, 1951)** (b/w)

Film4
11.00am Mysterious Island (PG, 1961) Sci-fi adventure starring Michael Craig (AD) **1.05pm Spies in Disguise (PG, 2019)** Animated adventure with the voice of Will Smith **3.10 Send Me No Flowers (U, 1964)** Romantic comedy starring Rock Hudson and Doris Day **5.15 Spartacus (PG, 1960)** Stanley Kubrick's historical drama starring Kirk Douglas and Laurence Olivier **9.00 The Rock (15, 1996)** An FBI chemical weapons expert and a jailed SAS veteran must break into Alcatraz to bring down a renegade general and his men. Action thriller starring Sean Connery, Nicolas Cage, David Morse and Ed Harris **11.45 Journeyman (15, 2017)** Boxing drama, written, directed by and starring Paddy Considine **1.35am-3.30 Pixie (15, 2020)** Crime comedy starring Olivia Cooke

BBC3
7.00pm The Catch Up **7.05** Deadly 60. A venomous snake **7.30** Deadly 60. New Zealand **8.00** Top Gear. Jeremy creates his own version of the Battle of Britain **9.00** Scamanda. Four-part docuseries about mother and blogger Amanda Riley (AD) **9.45** Scamanda. An investigative reporter starts looking more closely at Amanda's story (AD) **10.25** Scamanda. When the IRS step in, Amanda's web of lies begins to unravel (AD) **11.05** Scamanda. As the Department of Justice closes in, Amanda insists that she is still ill. Last in the series (AD) **11.45** Daddy Issues. A chance to see series 1 of the sitcom (AD) **2.20am** Yaxlont. Short film **2.35am-3.55** Scamanda (AD, SL)

ITV2
6.00am Backyard Builds **6.30** Dinner Date (AD) **7.30** The Real Housewives of Potomac **8.15** The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills **9.15** The Only Way Is Essex **10.10** Dawson's Creek **11.05** Charmed **12.05pm** Deal or No Deal (AD) **1.05** Supermarket Sweep **2.05** Wheel of Fortune (AD) **3.05** The Only Way Is Essex **4.05** The Real Housewives of Potomac **5.00** The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills **6.00** Celebrity Catchphrase (AD) **7.00** Wheel of Fortune (AD) **8.00** The 1% Club (AD) **9.00** Olivia Attwood: The Price of Perfection. K-Beauty (5/6) **10.00** Family Guy (AD) **11.30** American Dad! (AD) **12.35am** Bob's Burgers (AD) **1.30** Plebs (AD, SL) **1.55am-2.20** Deep Fake Neighbour Wars (SL)

ITV3
6.00am George and Mildred **7.05** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **8.05** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **9.10** Agatha Christie's Poirot (AD) **11.30** Heartbeat (AD) **1.40pm** Midsomer Murders (AD) **3.35** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **4.40** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **5.50** Heartbeat. Rural drama (AD) **8.00** Vera. The detective investigates Newcastle's drug underworld to discover the identity of a man found dead (2/4) (AD) **10.00** Lewis. A college dean is found bludgeoned to death following a heated pub debate (AD) **11.50** Agatha Christie's Poirot. The dapper Belgian sleuth receives anonymous letters outlining a killer's intention to murder a succession of people in alphabetical order (AD) **2.00am-2.25** George and Mildred

ITV4
6.00am Magnum, PI (AD, SL) **8.05** Minder (AD, SL) **9.10** Boon **10.15** Robin of Sherwood **11.20** The Professionals (AD) **12.25pm** Magnum, PI (AD) **2.35** American Pickers **3.40** Boon **4.45** The Professionals (AD) **5.55** Minder. The police pick up Arthur (AD) **7.00** Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion 2026 Highlights **8.00** World Rally Championship Highlights. The Rally del Paraguay **9.00** River Monsters. Extreme angler Jeremy Wade visits the site of the Chernobyl disaster **9.30 FILM: Universal Soldier (18, 1992)** Sci-fi thriller starring Jean-Claude Van Damme **11.35** Black Sails. Eleanor negotiates for peace **12.40am** BattleBots **1.30** American Pickers **2.30am-3.00** Auto Mundial

U&Drama
6.00am Teleshopping **7.25** The Bill **8.25** Doctors **9.40** Classic Holby City **11.00** Casualty (AD) **12.00** The Bill **1.00pm** Classic EastEnders **2.15** Classic Neighbours **3.20** Whitstable Pearl (AD) **4.20** Kingdom **5.20** As Time Goes By **6.00** Last of the Summer Wine **8.00** 'Allo 'Allo! **8.35** 'Allo 'Allo! **9.15** 'Allo 'Allo! **9.55** New Tricks. Part one of two. The team investigates a 1982 murder in Gibraltar (1/10) (AD) **10.55** Copper. Annie Reilly's pursuers become brutally violent **11.55** Lovejoy. Lovejoy sets out to exact revenge (12/12) **12.55am** Sister Boniface Mysteries (AD) **1.55** At Home with the Braithwaites **2.55** The Chelsea Detective (SL) **4.00am-6.00** Teleshopping

Variations

BBC1 N Ireland
10.40pm House of the Year (r) 11.10 FILM: Creed (2015) 1.15am-6.00 BBC News

BBC1 Scotland
7.00pm-8.00 River City (r) 10.40 EastEnders 11.10 FILM: Creed (2015) 1.15am Scotcast (r) 1.45 Weather 1.50am-6.00 BBC News

STV
9.00pm-10.00pm 800 Words: STV Player Presents (r) 11.05 Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? (r) 12.00-3.00 Shop 4.10am-6.00 Night Vision

UTV
10.45pm View from Stormont 11.45 Abbey Clancy: Celebrity Homes (r) 12.10am-1.00 Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace — What Happened Next (r)

BBC Scotland
7.00pm Reporting Scotland 7.30 Life on the Bay (r) 8.00 This Farming Life (r) 9.00 Stolen Babies 10.30 Scotcast 11.00pm-12.00 David Wilson's Crime Files (r)

S4C
6.00am Cyw 12.00 News; Weather 12.05pm Heno (r) 12.55 Bwrdd i Dri (r) 1.25 Arfordir Cymru: Sir Benfro (r) 2.00 News; Weather 2.05 Prynhawn Da 3.00 News; Weather 3.05 Gwesty Aduniad (r) 4.00 Awr Fawr 5.00 Stwnsh: Criw'r Cwt (r) 5.15 Grisi a'r Lemingod 5.25 Y Tri Mysgedwr (r) 5.40 Un Cwestiwn (r) 6.00 Y Sîn (r) 6.30 Codi Hwyl (r) 6.59 News 7.00 Heno 7.30 News; Weather 8.00 Pobol y Cwm 8.25 Nol o'r Dibyn gyda Iolo Williams (r) 8.55 News; Weather 9.00 Siwrna Scandi Chris (r) 10.00 Iaith ar Daith (r) 11.00pm-12.05am Y Cosmos (r)

PBS America
8.00am Weathered: Earth's Extremes **8.50** Secrets of the Royal Palaces **9.50** Ancient Apocalypse **10.55** France: The Post War Recovery **12.00** Cleopatra **1.00pm** Secrets of the Royal Palaces **2.10** Ancient Apocalypse **3.20** France: The Post War Recovery **4.30** Cleopatra **5.30** Secrets of the Royal Palaces. Windsor Castle **6.30** Ancient Apocalypse **7.35** France: The Post War Recovery. Part one of two. French industry and agriculture in the wake of the Second World War **8.50** Cleopatra. Part one of two. Docudrama about the Egyptian ruler **9.50** Secrets of the Royal Palaces **10.50** Ancient Apocalypse. A look at the fall of the Roman Empire **12.00** France: The Post War Recovery. Part one of two **1.15am-2.00** Weathered: Earth's Extremes

Sky Atlantic
6.00am Fish Town (r) **8.00** Billions (r) (AD) **10.15** The Last of Us (r) (AD) **12.45pm** Homicide: Life on the Street (r) **2.45** Billions (r) (AD) **4.55** The White Lotus (r) (AD) **6.25** The Last of Us. A survivalist forges a connection. Joel searches for his provisions (3/9) (r) (AD) **7.55** The Last of Us. Joel and Ellie draw the attention of a vindictive rebel leader (4/9) (r) (AD) **9.00** Little Bird. Tragedy strikes unexpectedly (5/6) **10.00** Little Bird. The Bird family reunites. Last in the series **11.00** Das Boot. Hoffmann insists on further training despite the crew's desire to head to battle. Simone pieces together the previous night's events in La Rochelle. In German (r) **12.10am** The Five-Star Weekend (r) (AD) **2.05** Gomorrah: The Origins (r) **4.15-6.00** The Guest Wing (r) (AD)

Sky Docs
6.00am History of the Sitcom (r) **7.00** Discovering: Matthew McConaughey (r) (AD) **8.00** The Directors (r) **9.00** Last Call: When a Serial Killer Stalked Queer New York (r) (AD) **10.00** Vegas: The Story of Sin City (r) **11.00** Dark Horses: Italy's World Cup Triumph (r) **12.00** Lance (r) (AD) **4.00pm** The Directors (r) **5.00** Discovering: Matthew McConaughey. A profile (r) (AD) **6.00** The Man Who Bought Cricket. The story of financial fraudster Allen Stanford (1/3) (r) (AD) **7.00** David Frost Vs (1/6) (r) (AD) **8.00** The Body Next Door. A death in the South Wales Valleys (r) (AD) **11.00** Rainbow Warrior (r) **1.00am** QPR: The Four Year Plan. Documentary (r) (AD) **2.50** Mr Dynamite: The Rise of James Brown (r) (AD) **5.00-6.00** Discovering: Matthew McConaughey (r) (AD)

U&Yesterday
6.10am The Architecture the Railways Built (AD) **8.00** Bangers & Cash **10.00** Rise of the Nazis **11.00** The World at War **12.00** Antiques Roadshow **2.00pm** Bangers & Cash (AD) **4.00** Rise of the Nazis **5.00** The World at War **6.00** Antiques Roadshow **7.00** Seven Worlds, One Planet. The wildlife of Australia (4/7) (AD) **8.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics. A Peugeot 205 GTI (AD) **9.00** Bangers & Cash. Featuring a Mark 1 Astra GTE (AD) **10.00** Bangers & Cash. A Dutch DAF 66 lands at a showroom (AD) **11.00** Bangers & Cash. Paul collects a 1971 Jaguar E-Type (AD) **12.00** Bangers & Cash. A Jaguar E-Type and two Ford Escorts **1.00am** Find It, Fix It, Flog It **2.00** The Architecture the Railways Built (AD) **3.00-6.10** Teleshopping

MindGames

Tetonor Easy No 705

59	270	45	344
170	39	260	38
44	450	36	448
336	33	324	90

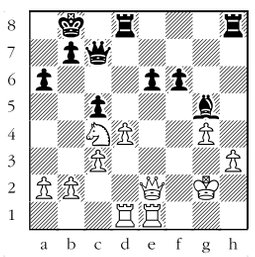
1	2	4	5		15	16	18	18		28	30			86	

When complete, the strip below the grid can be split into eight pairs of numbers. Adding the numbers in a pair gives one of the 16 numbers in the grid. Multiplying them gives a different number in the grid. For example, a 4 and 6 in the strip could be paired to make 10 (4+6) and 24 (4x6) in the grid. Enter each sum below the corresponding number in the grid. The blanks in the strip must be deduced, bearing in mind the numbers are listed in ascending order.

The next Tetonor puzzle will appear on Thursday

For more puzzles, including Mini Sudoku, extra Codeword, Train Tracks and Futoshiki go to page 10

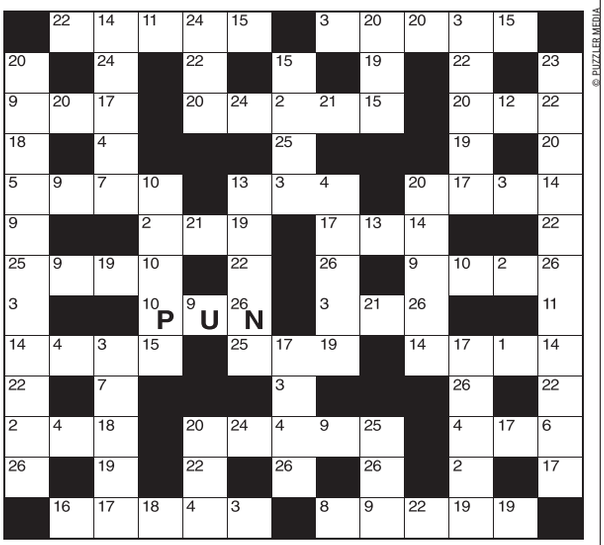
Winning Move



Black to play.
This position is from Nersissian-Gelman, Titled Tuesday, chess.com 2026.

Earlier in this game White, somewhat inadvisedly, grabbed a pawn but had to expose his king in order to do so. If the kingside formation of Kg2 and pawns on h3 and g4 could magically be dropped back to Kg1, pawns h2 and g3, White's position would be fine. However, the current exposure is too much. Why?

Codeword No 5934



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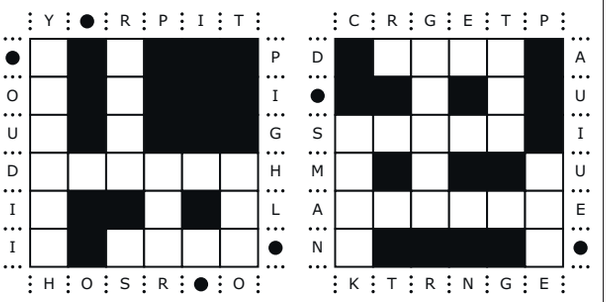
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
								U	P				
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
												N	

Every letter in this crossword-style grid is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded. *Yesterday's solution, right*

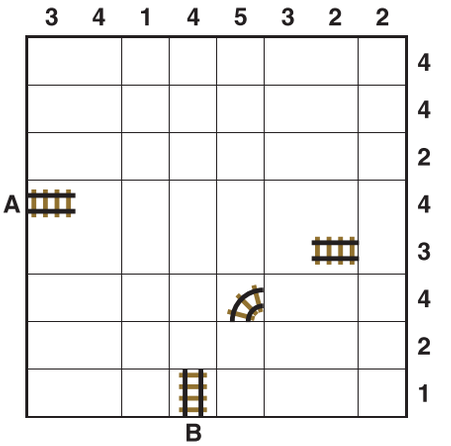
Cluelines **Stuck on Codeword?** To receive 4 random clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. If you have an old newspaper and need clues from the past 7 days, call 0905 624 0024. Calls to 0905 cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

Lexica Easy No 9089 Hard No 9090



Slide the letters either horizontally or vertically back into the grid to produce a completed crossword. Letters are allowed to slide over other letters

Train Tracks No 2959



Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

Quintagram® No 2661

Solve all five **cryptic** clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Briefly regretting destruction (4)

— — — —

2 Inexpensive drug man swallows (5)

— — — — —

3 Nurse first to yell agreement (6)

— — — — — —

4 Army unit's unfinished treatment plan (7)

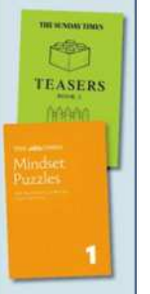
— — — — — — —

5 Permit Anne to move animal (4,6)

— — — — — — — — — —

A	A	A	C	E	E	E	E
E	E	G	H	I	I	I	M
M	N	N	N	N	P	P	R
R	R	R	T	T	T	U	Y

Challenge your mind with these fiendish word and number puzzles



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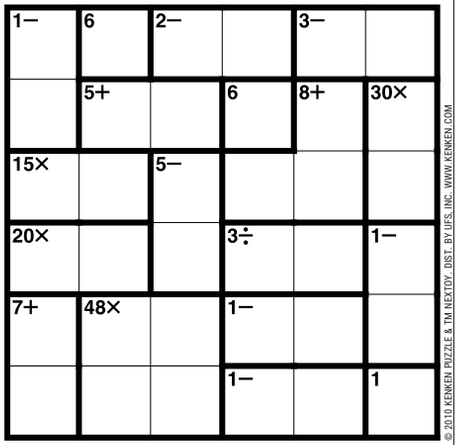
Try Wordhunt and Picle, our new online Quick Play puzzles at thetimes.com/puzzles and on the Live app

KenKen Medium No 6926



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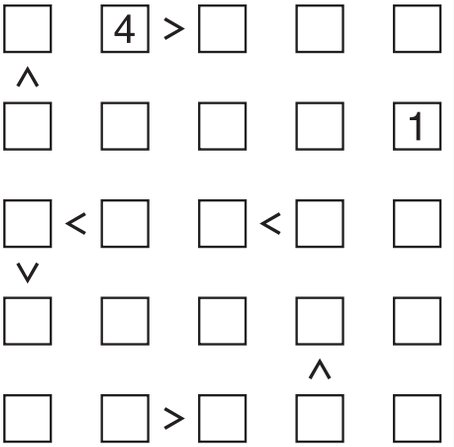
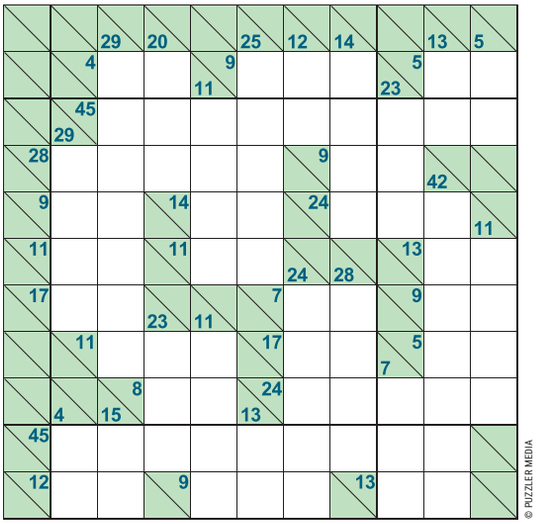
All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.

Futoshiki No 5474



Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

Kakuro No 4433



Fill the grid using the numbers 1 to 9 only. The numbers in each horizontal or vertical run of white squares add up to the total in the triangle to its left or above it. The same number may occur more than once in a row or column, but not within the same run of white squares.

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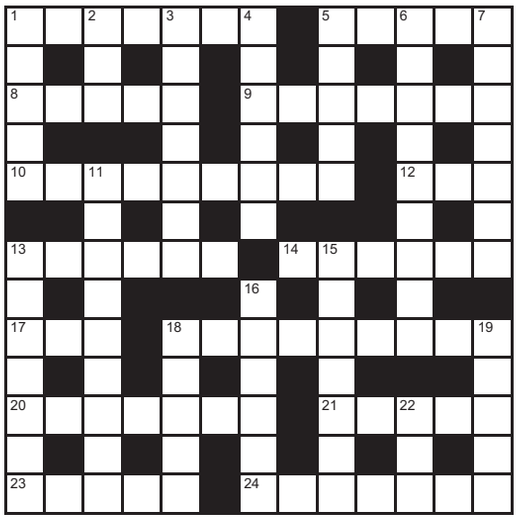
MindGames

times2 Crossword No 10,250



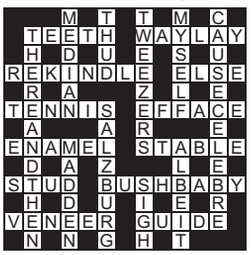
Across

1 Hot-tasting condiment (7)
5 Prescribed amounts (5)
8 Handle (a weapon, eg) (5)
9 Robust, long-lasting (7)
10 Advocate, endorse (9)
12 Small round mark (3)
13 Krakow's country (6)
14 Person owing money (6)
17 --- off, fall asleep (3)
18 Very dangerous building or vehicle (9)
20 Vie (7)
21 Unearth (3,2)
23 Oscar or Grammy, eg (5)
24 Piece in a traditional board game (7)

Down

1 Grass-cutting machine (5)
2 Start a legal action against (3)
3 Rear section of an insect (7)
4 Evaded (6)
5 Boldly ventured (5)
6 Newspaper employee (9)
7 Feel unpleasantly hot (7)
11 Roman Scotland (9)
13 Cure-all (7)
15 Hedgehog-like Australasian mammal (7)
16 Honest, forthcoming (6)
18 Deep-seated fear (5)
19 Nondescript songbird (5)
22 Prevent from speaking (3)

Solution to Crossword 10,249



Need help with today's puzzle? Call 0905 757 0143 to check the answers. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Bridge Andrew Robson

Executing a trump coup dept.

Spades are trumps, dummy is on lead, and you have to win all the rest of the tricks. Contrast (A) and (B).

(A) Dummy ♦432 — Declarer ♠AQJ; West irrel; East ♠K10 ♦5

(B) Dummy ♦32 — Declarer ♠AQ; West irrel; East ♠K10

In (A), you ruff a diamond but are now stuck in hand and have to give East his ♠K. In (B), however, you can overruff East's ♠10 with ♠Q then cash ♠A, capturing ♠K. The key to pulling off a successful trump coup is to shorten your trump length to the same as East's.

Let's now travel to St Albans for the Hertfordshire Bridge Association Swiss Pairs. Can you make 6♥ after West cashes the ace of spades and switches to a diamond? (You can, but no one did.)

The only danger is 4-0 hearts. If West holds ♥Jxxx, there's nothing you can do; if East holds ♥Jxxx, you may be able to pull off a trump coup. You'll need to ruff four times in hand to reduce your trumps to the same length as East's.

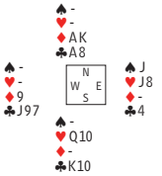
Ruff West's diamond and cross to the ace of hearts, West duly discarding. Ruff another diamond, optionally cash a top heart discarding a club, cross to a black winner (say queen of spades to the king) and ruff another diamond. Cross to a top club and ruff a spade. You have now ruffed four times and are down to the same length as East.

Dealer: South, Vulnerability: Neither

Teams			
	♠K98 ♥A ♦AKQ43 ♣AQ82		
♠A1032 ♥- ♦109865 ♣J976	N W E S	♠J765 ♥J864 ♦J72 ♣43	
	♠Q4 ♥KQ1097532 ♦- ♣K105		

S	W	N	E
4♥	Pass	6♥	End

Contract: 6♥, Opening Lead: ♠A



In this four-card ending, cross to the ace of clubs and lead a winning diamond, East surrendering.

Note that West's diamond switch at trick two gave you the necessary fifth dummy entry (four ruffs and an entry to get back at the end). On a black card trick-two play, there's no way home.

Thank you to Dave Simmons for the details.

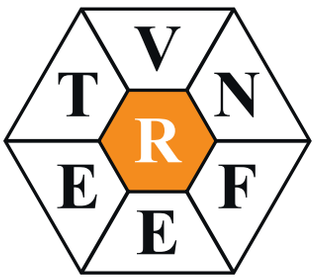
andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk

Brain Trainer

EASY	144	+8	+12	÷4	x6	DOUBLE IT	+12	x7	HALVE IT	÷3
MEDIUM	15	x4	÷12	TIMES ITSELF	x5	−57	-¼ OF IT	x3	−81	÷9
HARDER	19	x3	+⅓ OF IT	+64	÷20	TIMES ITSELF	+3/7 OF IT	÷5	x11	-39

ANSWER

Polygon



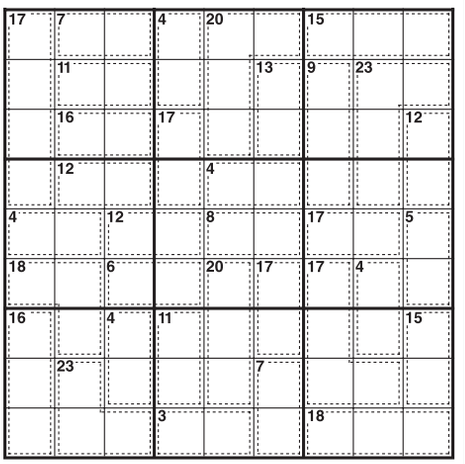
From these letters, make words of **three** or more letters, always including the central letter. Answers must be in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, excluding capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives.

How you rate 12 words, average; 17, good; 21, very good; 25, excellent

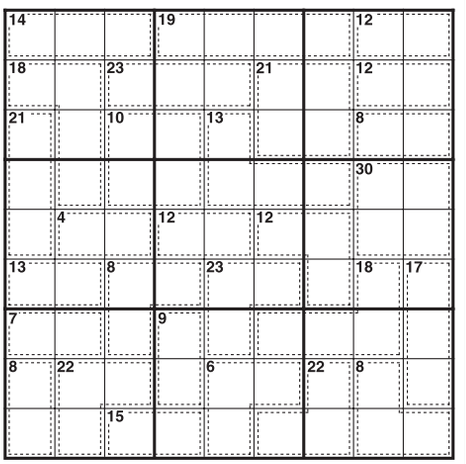
Yesterday's answers

dhol, dhole, doe, doh, dole, dose, dosh, doss, hod, hoe, hold, hole, hose, hosel, lode, loess, lose, loss, ode, old, olde, olé, shoe, sloe, slosh, **sloshed**, sod, soh, sol, sole

Killer Moderate No 10,906



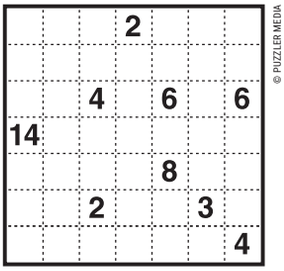
Killer Tough No 10,907



As with standard Sudoku, fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

Cluelines Stuck on Sudoku, Killer or KenKen? Call 0901 293 6263 before midnight to receive four clues for any of today's puzzles. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Cell Blocks No 5817



Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

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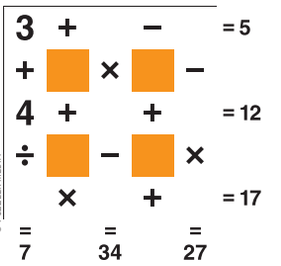
Set Square No 4436



Enter each of the numbers from 1 to 9 in the grid, so that the six sums work. We've placed two numbers to get you started. Each sum should be calculated left to right or top to bottom.

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Please note, BODMAS does not apply

Solutions

Quick Cryptic 3394

F	A	C	E	C	A	R	D	I	D	O	L
A	O	O	A	R	A					
C	A	N	O	N	P	E	A	S	A	N	T
T	I	T	P	R	W	I				
E	F	O	R	G	E	T	M	E	N	O	T
P	E	O	R	E	U					
A	R	R	I	V	E	A	D	O	R	E	D
R	E	V	F	I	E					
T	H	E	T	R	A	I	T	O	R	S	
I	R	S	E	R	O	S				
C	A	R	R	Y	O	N	C	A	T	C	H
L	O	N	E	T	U					
E	A	R	L	P	A	S	S	P	O	R	T

Codeword 5933

I	B	W	H	S	J									
T	O	X	I	C	I	T	Y	W	E	E	P			
T	N	Z	M	I	W									
S	A	D	D	L	E	N	E	T	H	E	R			
E	N	C	L											
O	V	E	R	S	E	E	W	H	O	L	E			
A	D	I	E											
S	P	A	S	M	U	N	I	F	O	R	M			
O	Q	F	L											
A	R	O	U	N	D	A	P	O	G	E	E			
O	I	E	N	P	T									
Q	U	I	N	B	A	C	K	P	A	C	K			
S	T	T	Y	Y	H									

Kakuro 4432

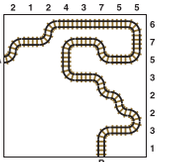
Sudoku 17,067

2	8	4	7	5	1	9	6	3
9	1	7	4	6	3	5	8	2
3	5	6	8	2	9	7	4	1
5	4	3	1	8	7	2	9	6
1	6	9	5	3	2	4	7	8
8	7	2	6	9	4	3	1	5
6	2	8	9	4	5	1	3	7
4	3	1	2	7	6	8	5	9
7	9	5	3	1	8	6	2	4

GK Crossword 353

J	O	H	N	S	C	H	L	E	S	I	N	G	E	R
U	A	C	A	L	Z	R	I							
P	O	R	C	U	P	I	N	E	M	O	U	L	D	
I	P	L	L	C	I	N	I							
T	H	O	R	P	E	S	T	U	R	G	E	O	N	
E	T	R	W	G										
R	A	D	I	U	S	M	U	D	F	L	A	T	S	
O	R	A	M	R	I	A								
B	U	R	B	E	R	R	Y	B	U	D	D	H	A	
I	B	P	I	V										
G	U	E	R	N	S	E	Y	S	T	A	B	L	E	
B	E	I	G	F	C	J	N							
A	R	T	E	X	G	O	O	L	A	G	O	N	G	
N	L	O	I	R	K	R	E							
G	R	E	E	N	W	O	O	D	P	E	C	K	E	R

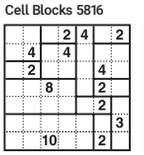
Train Tracks 2958



Sudoku 17,068

7	8	6	4	2	1	5	3	9
5	4	2	3	9	7	8	6	1
3	9	1	8	6	5	4	7	2
4	3	8	5	1	2	6	9	7
9	6	5	7	8	3	2	1	4
2	1	7	9	4	6	3	8	5
6	2	3	1	5	9	7	4	8
8	7	9	2	3	4	1	5	6
1	5	4	6	7	8	9	2	3

Cell Blocks 5816



Set Square 4435

Lexica 9087

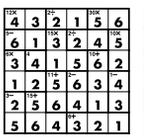
Sudoku 17,069

4	9	5	6	8	7	1	3	2
8	6	3	1	2	5	9	7	4
1	7	2	9	4	3	6	5	8
3	4	6	2	1	8	7	9	5
5	8	1	7	9	4	3	2	6
7	2	9	5	3	6	4	8	1
2	1	7	4	5	9	8	6	3
9	5	8	3	6	1	2	4	7
6	3	4	8	7	2	5	1	9

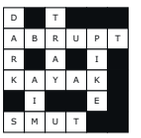
Futoshiki 5473

2	3	4	< 5	1
1	4	5	> 3	> 2
3	1	2	< 4	< 5
5	> 2	< 3	1	4
4	5	1	2	3

KenKen 6925



Lexica 9088



Killer 10,904

2	1	3	9	7	5	6	4	8
7	8	6	4	1	2	5	9	3
9	4	5	3	8	6	1	2	7
6	5	1	2	4	8	3	7	9
3	9	2	5	6	7	4	8	1
8	7	4	1	3	9	2	6	5
5	2	7	6	9	3	8	1	4
1	3	8	7	2	4	9	5	6
4	6	9	8	5	1	7	3	2

Killer 10,905

3	5	6	2	7	1	9	4	8
8	2	7	9	4	3	5	1	6
9	1	4	6	5	8	3	7	2
7	4	3	1	2	5	8	6	9
1	9	2	3	8	6	4	5	7
5	6	8	7	9	4	2	3	1
6	8	1	5	3	9	7	2	4
4	7	5	8	6	2	1	9	3
2	3	9	4	1	7	6	8	5

Today's solutions

Concise Quintagram
1 Vista
2 Pesto
3 Shinty
4 Statute
5 Formulate

Cryptic Quintagram
1 Ruin
2 Cheap
3 Treaty
4 Regimen
5 Pine marten

Sakuro 4835

Brain Trainer
Easy 588
Medium 8
Harder 115

Word watch

Pongee (c) A soft unbleached silk (*Chambers*)
Crena (c) A notch or indentation (*Collins*)
Fother (b) An enormous quantity of gold (*OED*)

Chess — Winning Move

1 ... Rxh3! strips away protection from the white king. After 2 Kxh3 Rh8+ forces a quick mate, a typical line being 3 Kg2 Qh2+ 4 Kf3 Rh3+ 5 Ke4 Qf4 mate.

Quiz

1 Sweden **2** Nile **3** Helicopters, specifically Apache attack helicopters **4** Londinium **5** Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) **6** Oliver Cromwell **7** Thames **8** Ludwig van Beethoven **9** Tarzan or John Clayton. Richardson played the 6th Earl of Greystoke **10** David Tennant **11** *Little Dorrit* **12** George Santayana **13** Cathode rays **14** Mr Teasy-Weasy or Raymond Bessone **15** UB40

THE TIMES

01.09.26

MindGames

For extra puzzles
See page 10

Word watch
David Parfitt

Pongee
a An early computer games addict
b An orangutan
c A soft unbleached silk

Crena
a A Spanish song and dance
b A platform for gladiatorial contests
c A notch or indentation

Fother
a A chaotic situation
b An enormous quantity of gold
c To foam at the mouth

Answers on page 15

Sudoku

Mild No 17,070

9								1
7	4						5	6
		8	5	3	1	9		
	5			6			3	
			2		7			
	7			8			9	
		2	6	7	3	4		
4	6						1	3
3								5

Difficult No 17,071

6								
4		5		8				
	2		9			4		5
					2		6	1
		8	6		5			
					3		5	8
	9		1			5		2
7		6		3				
8								

Super fiendish No 17,072

4	9			2				
		2	8	1				
					3			
				3	5	7		
	3				7		1	9
8		9					3	
	8		3				7	
9		3		7				1
	2		5					3

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Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

The Times Daily Quiz
Olav Bjortomt

1 Sveriges Riksbank is the central bank of which Scandinavian country?

2 The Egyptian god Khnum was known as the lord of the first cataract of which river?

3 Which type of attack aircraft is depicted in the Banksy artwork *Happy Choppers*?

4 What was the ancient Roman name for London?

5 In 2020, Keith Weed was appointed president of which UK gardening charity?

6 Which lord protector was executed on January 30, 1661 — two-and-a-half years after he died?

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES

7 In 1997, the dredger Sand Kite crashed into a concrete pier of which flood barrier?

8 Which German composer referred to Josephine Brunsvik in love letters as his "only beloved"?

9 Ralph Richardson's last major film role was playing the grandfather of which character in *Greystoke* (1984)?

10 Which former *Doctor Who* star plays Lord Tony Baddingham in the TV series *Rivals*?

11 Which 1857 Charles Dickens novel is divided into parts titled *Poverty* and *Riches*?

12 In *The Life of Reason*, which Spanish-born US philosopher wrote: "Music is essentially useless, as life is"?

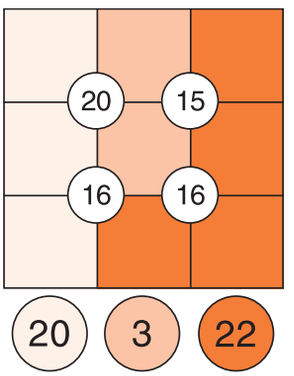
13 JJ Thomson discovered the electron in 1897 while studying which rays?

14 Which celebrity hairdresser was part-owner of Rag Trade, the 1976 Grand National winner?

15 Formed in Birmingham in 1978, which reggae band is pictured?

Answers on page 15

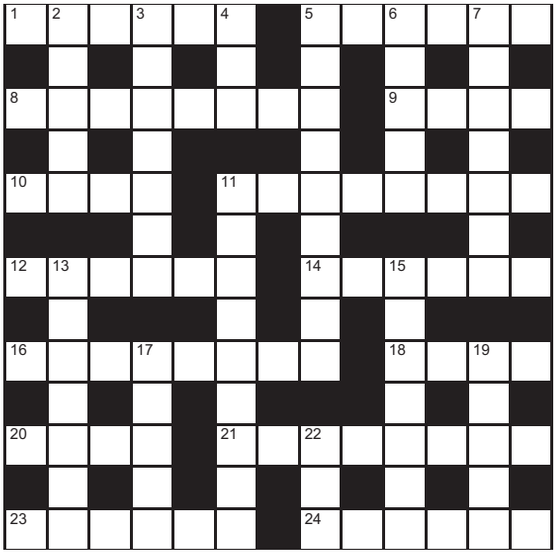
Sakuro
No 4835



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

For interactive puzzles visit thetimes.com

The Times Quick Cryptic
No 3395 by Hurley



Across

1 Floor covering in vehicle, much liked (6)
5 Impressive building in China attracting crowds, European, primarily (6)
8 Person in authority reigning over Norway? Not entirely (8)
9 Group of whales round northern body of water (4)
10 Cutting part of blade — move cautiously (4)
11 Bad errors involving church — one might have magic solution? (8)
12 Dad's Conservative — snubbed minister (6)
14 Unfortunately rude about street cleaner (6)
16 Help rejected — group's bitter attack (8)
18 Inducement to protect a TV series (4)
20 Having brought in whiskey, criticise person easily manipulated (4)
21 Refined experience almost complete (8)
23 Calm, somewhat wiser, energetic (6)
24 Spice fan, Margaret (6)

Down

2 Bypass article on empty space (5)
3 Tense here (7)
4 Large number not turning up (3)
5 Bird's role on trip, outside capital of Greece (9)
6 Failing in circuit, extremely strange (5)
7 Assemble in religious building with English for time (7)
11 Napkin I test — ever flexible (9)
13 A soldier states having no limits is trouble (7)
15 Dubious new set-ups challenged at first (7)
17 Hint of openings for new goalkeepers in knockout game (5)
19 Entertain first-class person, inspiring (5)
22 Source of light issuing at regular intervals (3)

Yesterday's solution on page 15

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